

# Making Room for Spirit

2018 Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture

Arthur M. Larrabee

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Canadian Quaker Learning Series



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by Arthur M. Larrabee

Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture  
presented at Canadian Yearly Meeting August 5, 2018

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## About this Pamphlet

Author Arthur Larrabee is a lifelong Friend and member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. He has served as clerk of his meeting, the Committee in Charge of Westtown School, and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which he also served as General Secretary for seven years.

*Making Room for Spirit* was the 2018 Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture, presented at the Gathering of the Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, on August 5, 2018 at Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario.

Sunderland P. Gardner (1802–1893) was an outstanding figure among Canadian Friends. He ministered with great plainness and vigour. Day or night, he was ready to travel in all weather to be with those who were sorrowing. He left behind a legacy of great tenderness. (adapted from *The Quakers in Canada: A History*, by Arthur Dorland)

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Greetings, Friends.

I am honored to be this year's Sunderland P. Gardner lecturer. Thank you for inviting me to speak and for your warm welcome. I've been looking forward to this opportunity for some time, and now the time has come.

I can't tell you how glad I am to be in Canada. My home is in another country. It's the one just to the south. Currently, we are experiencing a hefty dose of political turmoil. Our present government is headed by you know who: someone who has contributed to a roiling climate of incivility, racism, misogyny and xenophobia. I hope you won't think me immodest, but it has occurred to me that our president is someone who might benefit from the talk I am about to give. For the time being, it is a pleasure to be in Canada, where, at least to an outsider, there is a markedly different political climate. From the States, Canada has never seemed more attractive or more welcoming.

But I am not here to talk politics. I am here to talk about matters of the Spirit.

I want to open this part of my talk with a saying that Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, had inscribed over the door to his home: "Summoned or not, God will be present." I believe this to be true. I also believe that if we truly want to experience God in our lives, now or at any other time, we must make room for God and invite God in. There must be room and an invitation.

Summoned or not, God is present with us this evening and will be present with us at this gathering of Canadian Yearly Meeting. At the same time, now and in the week to come, I pray that we will make room for God and invite God in; I pray that our thoughts and our words, our meditations and our actions, will be aligned with what we understand of God's spirit and God's truth.

As will become evident, I will be using different names to reference a higher spiritual power: primarily God, Spirit and the Divine. I will use these names more or less interchangeably.

My talk this evening is about making room for Spirit. It is about the patterns and behaviors of our lives that crowd out Spirit. And it is about transforming the obstacles that get in the way of a deeper, richer, more meaningful experience of the Divine.

Marianne Williamson is a preacher and an author based in California. These are her words: “You can let the force which holds planets in place and causes flowers to grow run your life, or you can try to do it yourself.” That’s the force for which I want to make room; that’s the force I want to invite into my life.

I bring with me tonight an assumption that each of us would like to have a better relationship with this same force – a force which has many names. I bring with me tonight an assumption that each of us would hope for a more fulfilling life in the Spirit. I know, for me, that I hope for a more conscious awareness of the presence of God in my life. I want to feel filled up with the Spirit of God. I want to live with Divine awareness. I want to trust that if I am open to the Spirit of God, my life will be deeper, richer and more meaningful. I want to experience spiritual joy, peace and centeredness. I want to feel the availability of spiritual guidance in my life. I want to experience the accompaniment of the Spirit in my life, and I want to feel my eternal connection with the Creator. Amen.

The question is: “What keeps all of this good spiritual stuff from happening?” What are the obstacles? I suspect that each of us could name our own obstacles, but for me, tonight, I want to name four obstacles that appear and reappear in my life. They may or may not resonate with you, but what I have in mind are the obstacles of attachment, impatience, fear, and unyielding certainty.

I aspire to make room for Spirit by dismantling and dissolving these obstacles as they may appear. Actually, the word I like better is “transforming” the obstacles. There is energy tied up in the obstacles of our lives, and what I really hope to do is to disentangle and redirect that energy, to transform it, so that it is welcoming of Spirit and not a barrier.



Making room for Spirit is also about living in the present: not in the past, not in the future, but in the present.

I want to say something about living in the present. It is a place which welcomes life on its own terms, without judgment. It is a place which welcomes life as it comes to us and not as we wish it were. It is a place where there is room for Spirit.

There are many stories, in my experience mostly from the Buddhist and Taoist traditions, which point to this place.

This story comes from the Taoist tradition. It is a well-known story, and may be familiar to people here. I call it the story of "The Man, the Boy and the Horse."

An old man and his son lived in an abandoned fortress on the side of a hill. The son was the sole support of his father, and their only possession of value was a horse.

One day, the horse ran away. The neighbors came by to offer sympathy. "This is a terrible thing," they said. "How do you know?" asked the old man.

Several days later the horse returned, bringing with it several wild horses. The old man and his son shut them all inside the gate. The neighbors hurried over. "This is fabulous," they said. "How do you know?" asked the old man.

The following day, the son tried riding one of the wild horses. Alas, he fell and broke his leg. Sure enough, the neighbors came around as soon as they heard the news. "What a tragedy!" they said. "How do you know?" asked the old man.

The following week, the army of the emperor swept through the village, forcing every young man into service to fight faraway battles. Many of them would never return. But the son couldn't go. He had a broken leg.

This story teaches me about a place to which I aspire. It teaches me about welcoming what life brings without judging it. It teaches me that in my willingness to suspend judgment, there is peace. It teaches me about a place into which I can welcome Spirit.

The following is from *The Course in Miracles*: “Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and to find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” Said another way, our task is not so much to seek for God, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within ourselves that we have built against God. And when we dismantle or transform these barriers, we get glimpses of God and have a greater experience of the Divine.

I turn, now, to four spiritual practices I have found useful in the work of transforming the obstacles which come between me and my full experience of the Spirit.

Earlier in the talk, I identified four obstacles that I encounter from time to time: attachment, impatience, fear and unyielding certainty.

The spiritual practices that I use to transform these obstacles – the practices I use to make room for Spirit, and what I want to speak about tonight – are:

The practice of dissolving attachments

The practice of waiting for guidance

The practice of dying into fear

The practice of embracing paradox

In a light-hearted way, I summarize these four practices as letting go of what I think matters to me, holding my horses, being willing to die, and being happy not knowing for sure. These are spiritually fruitful places to be.

In speaking about these practices, I want to be clear that I come to them with the consciousness of a spiritual seeker and not a psychologist. I am not a psychologist. I am, however, a seeker who believes profoundly that some of the tools and practices we often associate with psychology are tools and practices that also belong to the spiritual journey.

The first practice I’d like to lift up is the practice of dissolving attachments.

One of my goals in daily living is to find, and to sustain, peace of mind. Peace of mind is a consequence of living in the present moment,

being in the now. It is accepting life on its own terms. In the story of “The Man, the Boy and the Horse,” the exemplar of peace of mind was the man whose response to the judgments of his neighbors was, “How do you know?”

Some time ago, I heard the Dalai Lama speak in Philadelphia and I’ll never forget his main point. He said, “You can have three things in this lifetime. You can have possessions, friends and peace of mind. For me,” he said, “the most important one is peace of mind.” He then went on to remind us that he is the God-king of Tibet, that the Chinese government has invaded his country and that he is living in exile. And then he said, “I have made known to the Chinese government that they are not welcome; I have asked them to leave, but I will not lose my peace of mind over it.”

Wow! How many of us could lose our kingdoms, whatever our kingdoms might be, and not lose our peace of mind? It is a powerful teaching, the practice of which, in my perception, aligns the Dalai Lama with the force that holds planets in place and causes flowers to grow.

So, peace of mind is what I’d like to have – but from time to time I lose it.

When I lose my peace of mind, it is often because I find myself attached to something that is not happening. Something else is happening instead which I do not like. I find myself rejecting what is happening and holding on to my attachment. There is often a forcing energy and a focused determination associated with my behavior.

I do not like losing my peace of mind. When this happens there is not much room for the Spirit. There is only me and what I want. In this place I sometimes have feelings of despair, anger and self-righteousness.

I have a story. It is a story of attachments, how the attachments disturbed my peace of mind, and the process I used to transform them.

Some years ago, I pedaled my bicycle from my home in Philadelphia to Lansing, Michigan, a distance of about 650 miles. I wanted to attend the graduation ceremony of a friend as well as to have an adventure. My intention was to camp along the way and I left Philadelphia heavily laden with camping gear, filled with a vision of

averaging at least 75 miles a day, camping in church yards or fields at night, and arriving nine days later, happy and fit.

On the second day of the nine-day trip, 10 miles shy of the City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, at 1 in the afternoon, my rear tire went flat.

I was not prepared for this to happen. There was a bus stop nearby, with a three-sided shelter to which I retreated. The thought of dismounting my bags, disengaging the rear tire, and figuring out how to fix it seemed daunting. Then I discovered that the tire pump did not work. My peace of mind and I parted company.

The first thing I did was to sit down on the bus stop bench and eat three power bars. I was having a hard time being in the present moment, welcoming what life was bringing to me. In the moment, I had no idea what to do.

After a short time, I was able to move into another consciousness. I had an opening, and I began to realize that I had lost my peace of mind on account of certain attachments.

This is what I was attached to: I was attached to having my bike trip proceed precisely as planned. I was attached to averaging 75 miles a day. I was attached to not having breakdowns. And in the unlikely event of a breakdown, I was attached to not finding myself in a situation where I did not know what to do. In short, I was attached to being successful on my own terms.

As I processed these thoughts and did the work of inward listening, I became aware that underneath the attachments, holding the attachments in place was a measure of fear – fear being a glue that holds attachments in place.

What was I afraid of? Was I afraid of failing to live up to my idealized self-image, a painful place in all of us that believes the only way we can get basic emotional and psychological needs met is to be someone other than who we really are? My idealized self-image wants me to be someone who is always competent and in control; someone who accomplishes what he sets out to do; someone who stays on schedule; someone to whom bad things don't happen; and if bad things do happen, a man who steps into his competency and remains undaunted.

There I was on the bus stop bench, getting in touch with my fear, trying to welcome it and allow it to wash through me. I remembered the teaching that the only way to dispel fear is to welcome it, to feel it, and to allow yourself to move into it and through it until you realize that there is really nothing to fear. Soon, the fear began to yield.

As I continued the work of inward listening, I became conscious of a misconception. The misconception was that if I could not live up to my idealized self-image, then I would come to nothing. A more dramatic way to name the misconception is to say that if I couldn't bring my idealized self-image to life, then it would feel to some part of me as though I would "die."

This is the misconception that finally revealed itself to me on that summer day in August. But misconceptions have power only so long as they remain unconscious. When they are exposed to the light of day and questioned, they are disarmed. The misconception began to lose its grip; the bright and reassuring energy of Truth began to flow over me; right there on the bus-stop bench I burst out laughing.

What was the truth? Would I die if I couldn't average 75 miles a day, or if I had a breakdown, or if I didn't know what to do? Of course not. The absurdity of my fears became quite funny. The attachment had begun to dissolve. I was back to living in the present moment, enjoying the day. It was a moment of surrender to what life had brought me. In that moment of acceptance there was joy and peace. I felt Spirit's presence. My peace of mind was restored. Laughing aloud I cried out, "Okay, Lord, what do I do now?"

This is a good place to get to on our spiritual journeys. It is the place where we make room for Spirit. It is the place where we can meet what life brings to us with awe and wonder and undefended openness. It is a place where we can experience unfettered access to the Divine Source, the power that holds planets in place and causes flowers to grow.

I'd like to summarize the process I used in making room for Spirit. First, I recognized that I had lost my peace of mind. Second, I looked for the attachments that were underlying it. Third, after identifying the attachments, I looked for, and allowed myself to feel the fear that

held the attachments in place. Fourth, I looked for the misconception underlying the fear and illuminated its emptiness. Fifth, and finally, I named the Truth. I had my peace of mind back.

It took me 45 minutes and three power bars to get to this place. Then it became clear as day. Harrisburg was 10 miles away and it was by then only 2 p.m. I figured that I could walk my bike on the average of two miles an hour and so I could get to Harrisburg by 7. I would take a hotel room, wheel my bike into the room, have a good meal, and the next day take my bike to a bike shop. I might lose a day, but so what. Life seemed good again.

And so I set out, pushing my bike along the shoulder of the highway. Within 20 minutes a car pulled over and a woman about my age jumped out.

"It looks like you need help. What can I do?" She insisted that we put the bike, and all my gear, into her car and she drove me straight away to a bike shop of which she knew, just the other side of Harrisburg.

I have a clear, inward understanding that this experience would not have turned out the way it did had I not first done the work of dissolving my attachments and restoring my peace of mind.

This, then, is what I call the spiritual practice of dissolving attachments. I use this practice for matters both large and small, and I use it whenever I'm aware that I've lost my peace of mind. It is one of the ways I make room for Spirit.

The second practice about which I'd like to speak is the practice of seeking and waiting for spiritual guidance. The human condition I am addressing here is impatience. In our willingness to wait for guidance we make room for Spirit.

Not long ago, a friend introduced me to a quotation from James Naylor, a contemporary of George Fox. The quotation is this:

"Art thou in the Darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness to lead thee."

I also like another passage with a similar message, this one from the Tao Te Ching:

“Do you have the patience to wait  
‘til your mud settles and the water is clear?  
Can you remain unmoving  
‘til the right action arises by itself?”

Both of these passages push back against the pressure to move too quickly. They push back against the pressure to “get on with it.” They push back against impatience. They speak to a strength of Quaker decision-making.

I have a story. It’s the story of my journey to know when I should stop practicing law.

I graduated from law school in 1970. The practice of law in the City of Philadelphia was good to me, but I soon realized that it wasn’t my real *métier*. Soon after beginning the practice of law, let’s say five years in, I began to wonder if I should be doing something else that would be more deeply satisfying. Mind you, I had no idea what that something else was, but I knew that law wasn’t really what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Early on, I latched onto the well-known admonition that emerged from the apocryphal exchange between William Penn and George Fox. You will remember that William Penn was the son of an English admiral and as a young man wore a sword reflecting his station in English society. William Penn was in his late teens when he became an early follower of George Fox. He was 16 years old when the Declaration of Friends to Charles II was published in 1660. It said, “...the spirit of Christ...will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world...” Soon thereafter, the story goes, William Penn asked George Fox, “Friend Fox, if I am to be a follower of yours, when must I take off my sword?” And Fox’s reply was, “William Penn, wear your sword as long as you can.”

I have taken from this story the idea that if you are willing to wait until taking off your sword comes from an inward motion, from a

spiritual prompting, and not just an intellectual notion, you will make a true and spiritually grounded decision, and you will never look back or take up your sword again.

At the time, I reasoned that my practicing the law was analogous to wearing a sword, and my mantra became, “Arthur, practice law as long as you can.” Sometimes it was, “Arthur, wear your sword as long as you can.” This mantra was of great spiritual encouragement to me. It gave me a spiritual framework within which to wait for inner guidance. It encouraged me to wait until right action arose by itself. It helped me to make room for Spirit. I practiced law for 23 years and over the last 18 of those years I rehearsed this mantra. Sometimes other sayings would come to the fore: “Arthur, make hay while the sun shines and then you can do something else.” The problem for me was that the sun kept shining.

Later in time, after starting my own law firm, and at a time when the firm had three lawyers and 10 paralegals, I found myself secretly hoping that the firm would “go down the tubes,” that is, fail, so that I would have an excuse to stop practicing law. But the mantra came again, “Arthur, wear your sword as long as you can.”

Still later in time, I found myself fantasizing that if only I had a terminal illness, finally I would have an acceptable reason to leave the law firm. I felt a bit shaken with this thought, and at this point I knew that something serious was going on within me to which I needed to pay attention, but I waited. “Wear your sword as long as you can.”

Late Friday afternoon, in the last week of April, 1993, I took myself, together with my journal, off to my favorite restaurant, and looked forward to having some time to myself. As I was enjoying liquid refreshment, suddenly, without warning, I was filled with an energy that caused me to shake and I heard a voice which spoke, clear as a bell, “Arthur, now is the time to take off your sword.” Tears and a deep sense of relief were immediate.

I experienced the words as Spirit speaking. This was the real McCoy. It was clear to me that this was guidance that I had been waiting for, for a very long time. Now was the time to leave the practice



of law. I had no idea of what I would do next. I did not have a lot of money. I could coast financially for several months but not for years. I wondered if I would end up on the streets, homeless. But you know, it didn't matter. The message was so clear and so powerful that it was self-authenticating and I knew it could be trusted. Whatever happened I knew I would be okay.

The next morning, Saturday, May 1, I went to have breakfast with my then law partner to share with him that I was wanting to leave the law firm. On the way, Archangel Gabriel, often referred to as God's messenger, came to me, appearing in front of my car, maybe 30 feet ahead and 20 feet high, wings outstretched toward me in welcome and affirmation. That day was the first and only time that this had ever happened to me. It was yet another sign.

This experience has taught me about not capitulating to impatience. It has taught me about waiting until right action arises by itself. I learned something about making room for Spirit by waiting until there was an inward experience that I could trust. This story is somewhat dramatic and extends over a long period of time, but I believe its lessons are good for matters large and small, whether short term or long.

I have a caveat. The practice of seeking and waiting for spiritual guidance can be misused if we use it in service to a fear of change. It behooves us to be mindful of how we are using this practice. Is it the servant of fear, or the servant of Spirit and wholeness?

The third practice I want to lift up looks at fear as an obstacle to our experience of Spirit. I want to talk about the practice of "dying" into fear. What I mean by this is being willing to face fear, to acknowledge it, and to move into and through it even though it may feel like dying to do so. It is a concept I have already introduced in my talk, but I want to develop it more fully here.

*The Course in Miracles* suggests that love and fear are opposites. When we are in a state of fear we exclude God. When we are in fear, we erect a barrier between ourselves and Spirit.

Fear is a part of our daily lives:  
We are afraid to speak our truth.  
We are afraid to take the first step.  
We are afraid to claim our power, to share our insights  
and to drop our masks.  
We are afraid to be imperfect.  
We are afraid to lead and we are afraid to follow.  
We are afraid to be who we are, and we are afraid that  
who we are is not enough.

Think of the things which may have given rise to fear in the process of coming to Yearly Meeting this week: Can I afford to take time off from work? What will we do with the kids? Where will the money come from? What happens if I don't get my application in before the deadline? Will I get a room near where my friends are? Can I afford to fly? Will there be anyone there I know except for the people I'd rather not see? Perhaps there has been some fear for each of us in the process of getting to Yearly Meeting this week.

Acknowledging that all of us will encounter fear in our lives, the question is: How do we transform it? How do we make room for Spirit?

My answer is that we need to be willing to "die" into our fear. Our job is to allow the fear, to welcome it, to take time to be with it. Our job is to avoid pretending we are not afraid, to avoid exaggerating it, to avoid palliating it with unhelpful behaviors. When we do this work, the fear begins to dissipate, it loses its grip, and we come to realize that ultimately there is nothing to fear.

The promise is that on the other side of our fear we will not only realize that there is nothing to it, but we will also discover new life. We will make room for Spirit. For me, this truth is symbolized by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

I know that many contemporary Quakers are shy about embracing the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But I find that we don't have to accept the biblical account in a literal sense in order to get the meaning out of it. Think of the parables that Jesus told. These stories

are completely made up. Jesus used them to teach. We do not, however, dismiss the teachings of the parables because the parables are not literally true. Rather, we use the parable of the “Good Samaritan” and the parable of the “Prodigal Son” to teach. If you have trouble with the resurrection, don’t reject it completely, but think of it as a parable.

This is what the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus teaches me: If you are willing to face your fear, and go into and through it, even though it feels like death, you will experience life more fully and abundantly. You will make room for Spirit.

Friends, we can do this, too. In our daily lives we have regular opportunities to “die” as we confront our own struggles, pain and fear.

I have a story related to my preparation for this talk. Part of my idealized self-image – to which you’ve already been introduced – believes that I must be more or less perfect in order to be accepted and loved. This can create some stress when I’m preparing to speak in public.

The voice of my idealized self-image whispers to me: “Arthur, if you could just think and speak more like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Barack Obama, everyone would love you. And if that’s not possible for you, you might just as well pack your bags, go home, lay down and die.”

It is here that I think of a teaching from the Jewish tradition: “On the day of judgement you will not be asked why you were not Abraham. You will not be asked why you were not Moses. But you will be asked, ‘Why were you not you?’”

So, how to be Arthur? To be Arthur, I need to die into not being my idealized self-image. I must die into not being Martin Luther King, Jr. or Barack Obama. Being Arthur means being willing to feel all the feelings of not being someone other than who I am until those feelings dissipate and lose their grip, and I come out on the other side being glad to be just who I am, no more, no less.

When I do this work, I make room for Spirit.

I have another caveat. I want to recognize that there is healthy, as well as unhealthy fear. In response to physical danger, we experience a healthy fear. What I have been talking about tonight is not that, but a psychological or unhealthy fear.

Finally, I want to name a fourth way that I have found to know and to make room for Spirit. It is the practice of welcoming paradox. Welcoming paradox addresses the spiritual obstacle of unyielding, single-minded certainty; the obstacle of not being open to more than one truth.

I have a story. This story happened a number of years ago in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It was a personnel matter which involved a senior staff leader of the Yearly Meeting. It was a very painful matter for the Yearly Meeting and one that received attention in the local newspaper.

The matter centered on the fact that the chief administrative officer was involved in an intimate relationship with another senior staff person who reported to him. For some, this raised an issue respecting personnel guidelines that one of two people in a relationship should not be supervising the other; for others, it was a moral issue about fidelity in marital relationships; and, for others, it was a non-issue.

I wish that I had understood then what I understand now. The matter has taught me about paradox. Some time after the whole matter had been concluded, as best we knew how to do it, I found myself remembering several meetings in which two different Bible passages were used to lead us to two different outcomes. Most often used in the discussion, over several months, was the story from the Gospel of John of the woman accused of adultery. Most of us know the story. The scribes and Pharisees brought the woman to Jesus to test him. They recited the Law of Moses which provided that such women were to be stoned. In the story, Jesus teaches, "Let whichever of you is free from sin throw the first stone at her." When the crowd heard this, they drifted away, one by one, not one having thrown a single stone.

This story was often cited to support the proposition that we should not make moralistic judgments about others because we are all sinners, and that the Yearly Meeting should drop the matter.

Another teaching of Jesus, however, was also before the meeting. This one was from *Matthew*. Paraphrased, it teaches: If your brother does wrong, go and take the matter up with him. If he does not listen,

take one or two others with you. If he refuses to listen to them, report the matter to the congregation, and if he will not listen even to the congregation, then treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

These verses stood for the proposition that we, the congregation, could and should make a judgment in the matter, especially as it was perceived that the matter, being unresolved, was hurting the Yearly Meeting.

In our discernment, the temptation was to line up behind one or the other of these truths, and to dig in.

The insight I had, some time after the matter had been resolved, was that we might have done better if we had acknowledged that these truths, even though seemingly contradictory, were both applicable. What would have happened if we had recognized the paradox and then embraced it? If both of these truths were applicable, we might have acknowledged that we had come to a place of “human not knowing.” This is a spiritually fruitful place to be. It is a place where we make room for Spirit. It is a place from which we may find an unexpected and creative way forward.

I’m remembering a passage in William Sloan Coffin’s book, *The Courage to Love*, “...the worst thing we can do with a dilemma is to resolve it prematurely because we lack the courage to live with uncertainty.”

In retrospect, I wonder what might have happened in the matter of the staff leader if the meeting had found the courage to live longer with uncertainty, to affirm the different truths that were present even though contradictory, and then to be in worship, expecting right action to arise by itself.

When we welcome paradox, we soften our positions of unyielding certainty and seek a larger truth. We make room for Spirit.

My theme this evening has been making room for Spirit. I want us to think of making room not only in our worship, but also in our daily living. For Quakers, making room for Spirit is a 24/7 concept.

We want to make room for Spirit, and we invite Spirit into our lives, but too often we don’t do the work of clearing out the clutter that gets in the way. Quakerism loses some of its promise if we settle for

being spiritual couch potatoes – inviting Spirit into our lives but not getting off the couch to move aside the clutter or to offer a chair.

There are many human patterns and behaviors that contribute to the clutter of in our lives. I've named four that keep popping up in my life: attachment, impatience, fear and unyielding certainty.

But it is also my experience that there are things we can do to transform the clutter. I've talked about the practices of dissolving attachments, waiting for guidance, dying into fear and embracing paradox.

At the beginning of my talk, I named what I hoped for on my spiritual journey. As I close, I want to share my hopes for all of us.

I hope for all of us that we will grow in our ability to meet what life brings to us with awe and wonder and undefended openness. I want us to experience unfettered access to the Divine Source, the power that holds planets in place and causes flowers to grow. I want all of us to live fulfilling lives in the Spirit, with a conscious awareness of the presence of God within us. I want us to feel filled up with the Spirit of God. I want us to trust that as we are open to the Spirit of God, our lives will grow deeper, richer and more meaningful. I want us to experience spiritual joy, and peace and centeredness. I want us to know the availability of spiritual guidance in our lives and to experience the daily accompaniment of the Spirit.

This journey of making room for Spirit is the journey I'm on. But it's not just my journey; it's a journey that invites all of us. My invitation tonight is that we might be on this journey together. The journey is a lot more rewarding when traveling with others.



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