



November 2009
Number 64

What Canst Thou Say?

Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

Bread and Roses

What Do People Really Need?

Mariellen Gilpin

Friends in Urbana-Champaign Meeting, Illinois, considered what we really need during a worship I was clerking a few years ago. It began when a Friend reflected on her recent work camp experience in Mexico, where she found herself wondering what true service was—was it doing what she thought the people needed, or what the people thought they needed? Since electricity had come to the little village, people no longer sat under trees in the evenings talking and weaving baskets, but instead sat indoors, alone, watching television. Was the loss of community what they really needed?

An elderly Friend then told about making a trip by car to a remote village in Northern Greece right after World War II. She gathered the women and asked them what they needed—food, medicine? It was a very hot, dusty day, and the women were all dressed in black, covered from head to foot. They told her what they really needed was to go swimming. So she loaded ten assorted women and children into her small car, and they directed her over the mountain and down to a little lake in the next valley. They had the best time they'd had in over a year, they told her. "I wanted to give them food, and what they needed was fun!" she told us.

A Friend who teaches high school Spanish shared a short story with a

title I realized translated to "Bread and Roses." The story was about a very poor village that found its way out of dire poverty because they began to grow flowers and plant trees, renewing their spirit. Visitors began to come to the village because it was so beautiful.

A Friend who once farmed in Kentucky spoke last, about a time when the Kentucky River overflowed its banks and flooded the little country church where she was a member. The National Guard was there to prevent looting. One day she and two others were at the church, using shovels to scrape loose the soaked carpet in the sanctuary—the carpet had been glued

down. They scraped, and rested, and scraped and rested. A National Guard soldier, a woman, saw what they were doing, and began scraping the carpet with them. The best part, our Friend said, was that the lady sang while she worked—a gospel hymn about God watching over every sparrow. Our Friend said it was not just that the lady really, really helped a great deal, but that she did it with such joy.

I hated to close meeting.

Mariellen Gilpin is an editor of What Canst Thou Say? She celebrates the many ways God helps her serve her meeting in spite of mental illness.

From the Editors:

From the beginning, WCTS has been known as a Meeting for Worship in print, but this theme itself, "Bread and Roses," arose out of the Meeting for Worship described above by WCTS Editor Mariellen Gilpin. It is challenging sometimes to know what we need and far more difficult to determine that for others. Here are some stories of that search.

One of the great blessings of serving as WCTS editors is the opportunity to frequently correspond with each other. Mariellen blessed us with a stunning poem prayer and we are passing that blessing on to you.

*Mike Resman and Judy Lumb
Editors for this Issue*

People Need Flowers

Allison Randall

Many years ago, my main source of income was making cloth appliquéd wall hangings. Many were landscapes, some scenes full of many different textures of cloth, sometimes subtle gradations of color, sometimes bright contrasts. I loved making these. I loved the feel of the various sorts of cloth; I delighted in the joy of choosing fabrics from my stash that spoke to one another. But I felt my choice of work wasn't doing anything important for the world.

One day I was complaining to a Quaker woman whose primary vocation was peace work that I felt useless. Here she was doing all this good stuff to change the world, and what was I doing? Making beautiful things for people to hang on their walls. What use was that to the world? She looked at me tenderly (she who had bought several of my wall hangings) and said simply and sincerely, "People need flowers, Allison."

Since she was (and is) a woman I admire greatly, her words stayed with me. I noticed that even more than before, as I worked on my wall hangings I imbued them with prayers for the people they would end up with.

Some years later I began making what I call Soothing Cloth Toys for Adults and Children: toys unlike any others I've seen, soft and velvety and

I came to realize that making toys was Good Work indeed, and I wondered how much of it was the toys themselves and how much was the prayers I put into them as I made them with love.

filled with millet, which makes them flow gently in one's moving fingers. As I began making them, remembering Lois's words, I imagined how they would help people, comfort them, bring them joy. I designed little stars to hold in your hand and feel, to bring comfort and calm. And Hands To

Hold, actual hand size (to hold when you need a hand to hold and no one is there), which drapes nicely in your hand and moves soothingly as you hold onto it. More and more toys followed as I sold at farmers' markets and got more ideas from my own inspirations and the inspirations of children and adults who saw my work.

Selling these things at the farmers' market was ideal, because many customers came by week after week, and gave feedback on what they had bought from me. They told me their tales, sometimes tearfully, of the good the toys did for them or people they loved. People who were lonely, or had cancer, or were going through tough times. I came to realize that making toys was Good Work indeed, and I wondered how much of it was the toys themselves and how much was the prayers I put into them as I made them with love.

I still don't know the answer to that wondering, and I've been making the toys for a very long time now. But I do know that the answer Lois gave me so many years ago, "People need flowers," inspired me, spoke truth to me, and that ever since I have been able to clearly see the deeper spiritual value in my work, and in other people's "flowers" too.

Allison Randall is a member of Keene Friends Meeting in Keene NH. She is a longtime leader of workshops and retreats throughout U.S. Quakerdom, and attempts to constantly recognize and acknowledge the Presence of God.



What Canst Thou Say? is an independent publication by and for Quakers with an interest in mystical experience and contemplative practice. It is published in August, November, February, and May. The editorial and production team is Lissa Field, Mariellen Gilpin, Lieselotte Heil, Richard Himmer, Chris Johns, Joan Johnston, Judy Lumb, Patricia McBee, Grayce Mesner, Mike Resman, Eleanor Warnock and Wayne Yarnall.

Please write for WCTS! Instructions to authors are on page 5. Send editorial correspondence to <mariellen.gilpin@gmail.com> or WCTS, 818 W. Columbia, Champaign, IL 61820. See the WCTS website for a history of WCTS and updated queries for future issues: <whatcanstthousay.org>

Subscriptions are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years. Back issues are \$1.50 each, \$15 for a partial set (Issues 1-20, 21-40, 41-60), and \$40 for a complete set up to the current issue. Email subscriptions are \$5 per year. Subscription correspondence should be directed to Richard Himmer <info@whatcanstthousay.org> WCTS, 1035 Hereford Drive, Blue Bell PA 19422-1925.

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Not Bred Alone

Steve Kohn

*Sure, not bread alone. Poor
Bernie Madoff, a man of means has all the FCS* he needs
until the end— his, or
the current _____
(political...social...economic...environmental) system's or
the next comet hits,
whichever comes first.*

*And let's not limit our thinking to just the words in FCS.
Add sleep, add health, add air. Consult the rules
for Guantanamo detainees for other possibilities,
and please keep in mind neurotransmitters and other internal molecular balances.
The point is bread is a given, even though it's not.*

*So in this imagined world where all material needs are fulfilled—
we are being very self-centered here—with not a thought
for human tapeworms, malarial parasites, poison ivy,
zebra mussels, or predator competitors for domesticated ungulates.
In that imagined world then, what do we really need?*

*No answer yet.
We need to know which we we are.
All of we? Just the ones who look like we, who think like we?
Who use like we? Who pray, they say, like we?
We-you! Without those others would we know who we?
Need we a break...or fix? You decide. Do
what we really need?*

*No answer yet.
What for? What end? What stage of age?
Last week, I helped "my" two grandchildren put away their laundry.
The five year-old needed some convincing to put shirts with shirts—
short sleeve/long sleeve, socks in pairs.
Two days later I looked for clothes.
His dresser drawers were jumbled.
"I like to dig around," he said.*

Whose end our means?

*No answer yet.
Perhaps redress the question.
What do we not need?
Too easy. Check the TV.*

*Perhaps change "we" to "I". Then,
balance among changes/stases, a functioning
hubris detector. Friendship with fears.
Presence with this moment imbued with gratitude.
And we, as well.
It's a start at this end.
For Bernie, too.*

** food, clothing, shelter*

Steve Kohn practices Vipassana Buddhism in Highland, New York, where he moved to be engaged with his grandchildren on a daily basis. He practices gratitude moment by moment.

Malling

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano

“No, I’ve never been to a mall,” Carmen told me shyly as she worked on my dead nail, which I thought would forever stay an ugly blue the rest of my life. She was our village manicurist, a simple woman who earns about thirty cents per manicuring session.

“Never?” I asked, quite unbelieving. In this age of golf courses, elevators and skyways, cell phones and computers, Carmen hadn’t yet seen the inside of a mall! In fact, we have two humungus malls just about facing each other six or seven kilometers away from our off-the-highway hilly village. She looked up at me and shook her head, “Honest, I haven’t. I...I’m afraid, I’m not the social type,” she brooded.

“Would you come, if we go together?” I proposed.

“Nakakahiya naman (It’s shameful), I don’t have the money,” Carmen now expertly worked her nipper to cut the side of the offending nail that dug

into my cuticle, to let my ring finger “breathe,” she said.

“You need not worry. Pray we’ll have a bit of money. Let’s just give Robinson’s Gallery (the name of the mall) a look-over, enjoy a merienda (snacks), and come home,” I said. Carmen made a tentative nod.

Saturday was our day. I gave her two hundred pesos (about \$5.00) as a gift, on condition that she would buy something for herself—not for her child or her husband—but herself.

First, we took a tricycle (a motorcycle with a side car) to the highway, then a breezy hop on a passenger jeepney to the mall. We climbed up the overpass to get to the mall entrance. An escalator carried us to the third floor. There we tarried at different shops to look at interesting items, slowly walked our way down to the second level and visited more stores. Tired, we looked down at a band rehearsing music on the ground floor.

“How big!” she whispered to me. Finally, Carmen decided to buy a pair of costume earrings for herself. She smiled and preened before a mirror hand-held by the stall owner. “Do I look good? Should I buy them?” she kept on asking, turning her sunburnt face this way and that. “Yes, yes!” I answered. “It fits you,” the owner chirped. With her extra pesos, Carmen bought another pair for her daughter. Then, we settled in an open diner for our snacks and engaged in happy chit-chat.

Soon, we were home again, she carrying a bag with some goodies—“for the husband” I told her. “Why are you doing this?” she asked before getting off from the tricycle, smiling but a bit teary. I hesitated and finally said, “Because it’s nice to go to a mall with someone like you.”

Since then, the Lord showed me a new ministry: that of giving some women friends in the village who know nothing but work, difficult husbands, querulous children, hard and often unhappy lives, a break—even just an hour or two. One at a time to make them really feel special; and as God sends me extra income. So far, Tonya and Lolita have had a joyous buying spree at a thrift store, and Josie, an early dinner at a nearby popular restaurant she hadn’t been to before.

It’s not anything earthshaking as feeding the faceless poor, but helping a few friends realize a dream, as strolling at a mall in a gentle, unhurried, non-intrusive manner elevates them to a plane where they can see themselves and Christ a little clearer. And, I hope, for them to feel a little closer to him, too.

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano lives in Barangay Atlas, a small hill village 40 kilometers south of Manila in the Phillipines. Her friend and WCTS contributor David Blair sent her a copy of the WCTS issue on “Gratefulness” and she liked it very much. Her desire is to develop a lifestyle that is constantly aware of the presence of God in whatever she does.

Unconditional Love

Mary R. Hopkins

As a child I was well drilled in the Ten Commandments and the wages of sin. The Holy Father crucified his only son who was, as far as I could understand, a good and innocent child. My parents looked up to these archetypes held before them and followed willingly. Not knowing otherwise, I labeled this behavior on their part, parental love.

When still an unseasoned Friend, I turned to my archetype of God and saw a bearded old man. This led me to use my hour of worship to reach beyond this image to Light, where I found warmth and joy. The patriarchal male image faded, and I discovered The Great Mother Goddess. She loved me no matter what I did! It was my first experience with Unconditional Love. This became engraved on my heart along with a deep desire to Walk Cheerfully over the Earth Answering That of God in Everyone.

This is not a completely sunny picture. I deeply mourn my children’s suffering, as they were raised by a young and ignorant, pseudo-Christian mother.

Mary R. Hopkins is a member of Kendal PA Friends Meeting. She authored the Friends General Conference pamphlet, “Dynamics of an Unprogrammed Meeting for Worship,” and was one of the first subscribers to *What Canst Thou Say?*

Calling

Alicia Adams

Across the dirt road from our Mimbres, New Mexico, house a horse is calling. Two mares live there in small adjacent corrals; one is alone this morning. At first her calls were frantic, one following another, registering her deepest feelings. This unhappy mare was left behind while her partner was ridden away. The left-behind horse shows me our deepest need: for intimacy with others of our kind. She shows me more: how we react when this is denied to us. Now she is no longer calling. Is she waiting? Hoping? Animals live in the present; her present is empty of other-horse presence. She is coping with what is.

I've known periods of this kind of coping. In fact, it seems to me that most of us, most of the time, are merely coping. We aren't acting in vital, self-expressive ways to meet our true need for meaningful relationships with others. We make-do with relationship facsimiles: proximity to others without meaningful relationship, without intimacy. Is this because we believe that our true needs won't be met? We adjust; we are diminished by this adjustment.

When I worked in the barrios of Venezuela in community development, I found that we all needed more than mere solutions to the problems the barrio residents faced. We were from very different backgrounds and I had to break this difference-barrier in my association with the women before we could begin to care for each other and work together. When I recognized their great strength and heart, this barrier was breached. We accomplished many projects together, chosen by them, but the real need for all of us was to be seen as we truly were. Our mutual focus and projects gave us all the opportunity to develop our gifts and be recognized for

them. We were in physical contact over a lengthy period of time: an important aspect of our growing intimacy. When I had to leave due to chemical poisoning, I greatly missed my women friends. I couldn't find this degree of closeness with those in my own culture: we don't take the time, nor have the intense mutual focus, to allow this to happen.

I feel strongly identified with both horses this morning. In the last 18 months, I've been mostly like the mare ridden away. She didn't respond to her

We don't take the time and effort to empathically connect with the intelligence and gifts of our physical selves.

partner's calls; she was focused on her opportunity for wider scope. Due to our chemical sensitivity, Dan and I have been isolated from those with whom we would ordinarily have close relationships. We left our rural home to travel south, into Baja California. We were looking for a clean environment near the ocean where we could recover our health. In our travels, while living in a small trailer, it's been difficult to remain in contact with ones we have long known and loved. In our enforced

intimacy and responses to many travel challenges, Dan and I have become very close. In this experience, we have gained a much wider scope than we had when we lived in our home in Mimbres. This wider scope is more than experiences of new country traversed: we broadened our inward scope.

This morning I'm identified with the horse left behind. Today is First Day, Sunday, and Gila Friends Meeting is gathering in Silver City, 25 miles away. I long to be there, to sit in silence with Friends, but this morning, it is impossible. It has taken most of my focus and effort to navigate through my morning dysfunction into relative clarity.

I'm realizing that the reason the mare's distressed calling resonated with me is that my animal nature has been denied the companionship of those with whom I feel the closest affinity: f/Friends and family. It is unnatural for one of our kind to be physically separated from those with whom there is a potential for true relationship.

What attention do we pay to the needs of our physical selves? Do we regard them, as most do their horses, as servants to meet our needs? These needs may be focused on companionship proximity with others and as our

Tell Us Your Stories!

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mates. Mostly, though, I see that our bodies are used by us as work horses. We use-up our bodies for our causes: ones we consider worthy and also ones to fill the time, to cope with our essential aloneness. We don't take the time and effort to empathically connect with the intelligence and gifts of our physical selves. Mostly we don't realize that there is great potential for a true relationship with our bodies.

In addition to our partnership intimacy, Dan and I have developed vital connections and love relationships with beings living in other dimensional realities. Some are human: they say they are our future selves. Others are of different forms from a variety of worlds: the Planetary Man creation. We connected with these people through silent worship. We asked for information and help to understand and change human destructiveness.

We are connected with these diverse beings through my ability to empathically identify with them. In this identification, I become the one who would communicate with us—to the degree that I'm able to do this. They speak through me. I am conscious; I also speak for myself in our communication, though Dan does most of the talking in our discussions. Through these connections, we see what it is that we really need. It mirrors what I experienced in the barrios.

What we have learned from our Planetary Man friends is that bodies communicate: they both receive and send information beyond that registered by our minds. When we deny our bodies opportunities to develop these communication links and expand their capacities for such, we, as spiritual beings focused in physicality, are greatly bereft.

Our planetary friends tell us that we humans are very unusual: we are high spiritual beings manifesting at a level of physical density that is usually inhabited by animals without indi-

What I Need

Janis Ansell

*Bread is Love, feeding
my body. A rose is Love—
soul food. All I need.*

Janis Ansell is a member of Rich Square Monthly Meeting (North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Conservative). She began to hear messages in haiku while enrolled in the School of the Spirit. She serves on its Board.

vidual self-identity focus. As animal-focused humans, we haven't taken the necessary steps to identify with our physical bodies. It is through identification with our bodies that we access the great wisdom and help available from our Planetary Parent, the Earth. Until we get this balance right, we—in our higher awareness—feel trapped by our physicality.

Our Earth is calling: calling for our awakening into true relationship with all Earth beings. Our bodies are our link to the diverse expressions of Earth life. Our bodies, like the horse across the way, are calling for true relationship in our partnership with them. We will not be whole until we respond, at every level, to this call.

Recently Dan and I were contacted by a powerful being of a Planetary Man species that we call the Bright Ones. When I first opened to this being, I knew immediately that this was an extraordinary contact. My body registered this. In ways I can't explain, my body expanded into expressions of gratitude and great eagerness for more.

Dan's reaction was as powerful and immediate as my own. "You are our way forward!" he exclaimed to this being. "I know this!" His face shown with unusual intensity; his eyes conveyed to me a deep awareness that resonated with that awakening in me.

We are connected with this being and his partner, feminine and masculine expressions of Planetary Man, at

our heart centers. These are actual, physically-located centers, we have been shown, which receive and send communications that we seldom recognize consciously. Nevertheless, we often react accordingly. Our evolutionary task is to open consciously to our heart-center communications.

"You are sleeping in physicality," the Bright Ones tell us. "We are sent to you by the Source to awaken you to your full potential. We were Called. It is up to us, together, to discover how our relationship will benefit both of us."

From connection with this being, Dan and I are realizing deep meanings in the life of our spiritual mentor, Jesus. We are called to live what our bodies intuited in our connection with the Bright One. Jesus demonstrated our way forward with his resurrected body. "Identify with me," he told us. Also, "Eat of this bread; it is my body. Drink of this wine; it is my blood, given for you." His message, we are seeing, is ordinarily missed. Partake of the bounty of the physical world: it is Spirit manifested. Identify with the one who perfectly united in his being the physical and spiritual. When we live this as Jesus promised we could, we gift those around us. We become the Peaceable Kingdom, within and without.

Alicia Adams is a member of Berkeley Meeting, California.

Service

Carrie Melin

What is Service? This is the question that has been on my mind since participating in an AFSC service project in Sonora, Mexico, in November 2005. Our project was to paint a cement block house in a small village of Seri Indians on the Gulf of California. After visiting the village, I had other ideas of what I thought should or could be done to help, such as the services of a dentist to improve the dental health of the villagers or a veterinarian to spay and neuter some of the many dogs. But those are my ideas, the ideas of an outsider. What would a Seri Indian say were the needs of the village and its people? Who decides? The village just got electricity. Now there are street lights blaring in the once dark and peaceful beach community. Some of the houses, which are nothing more than cardboard and scraps of wood, now have air conditioners or a TV disc. The Seri Indians are a very social group. It is not uncommon to see seven to twelve people gathered around someone's front yard, visiting while some of them carve figures out of ironwood or weave baskets made of limberbush. How will electricity and television change the lifestyles of these people? What is progress? What do people really need? These are my questions.

Carrie Melin attended Urbana-Champaign Meeting, Illinois, and now worships with Friends in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. She folk dances and teaches English as a Second Language.

A Quest for Intimacy

Mariellen Gilpin

I lived in the same house with my father and ate at the same table with him. But I was taught not to think well of him. The result was that I needed a daddy, and God was my daddy. From early in my life, I prayed to a loving God, someone who heard my confidences and wanted me to be a good person. In high school, I listened to the minister thee-ing and thou-ing God and thought, "God is perfectly capable of understanding us when we speak in our own language, about our own concerns. God doesn't need us to put on airs with him." I wanted to be real with God.

In college, I turned to Quakerism because of the conviction that "Christ is come to lead his people himself." I took that as both challenge and reassurance. I went to silent worship most Sundays, knowing that each worship was different, depending on

what I brought with me in my heart. I needed prayer, needed God, needed worship. I was on a quest for intimacy.

Then in middle life I became mentally ill. I was so drugged I could barely stand, let alone think two con-

I needed prayer, needed God, needed worship. I was on a quest for intimacy.

secutive thoughts. I wanted to pray. I was concerned that I would forget to pray for someone on my list, so I composed a short prayer and memorized it, along with the list of people I wanted to pray for. Each night and morning I said the prayer, often nodding off in mid-prayer, waking up, figuring out where I'd gone to sleep and continuing the recital. Sometimes I wasn't able to finish saying it at all.

A lot has happened during the thirty years I have been medicated, and the prayer has evolved to meet the current need, whatever it might be. I have been so aware of God's presence in this illness that the prayer has become less a petition and more an expression of thanksgiving, of praise and love and adoration. Often it has happened that something a *WCTS?* author has said has been just what I needed to say, so Friends may well see resonances between their stories and my prayer. Often, too, it has happened that I have been struggling to find a way to express a concept, and a Voice has kindly offered exactly the concept I needed—often as not, a challenging as well as helpful moment of guidance. A sense of intimacy has grown. The prayer may be rote, but it is always real.

The prayer has gotten longer and longer over the years—I keep experiencing new things to be grateful for. It had never occurred to me to write the prayer down, however. A few months ago a journalist interviewed me, and expressed a wish to read a 20-minute "evolving rote prayer." I committed the prayer to paper for the first time. Awhile later, it occurred to me to share the prayer with former *WCTS?* editor Carol Roth. Carol called to urge me to publish it—she had found it helpful, and thought other *WCTS?* readers would also be helped.

The rest of the editorial team agreed, but there was a problem—the prayer just didn't really fit the *WCTS?* format. We decided to make it available to our readers on the *WCTS?* website <whatcanstthousay.org>. Friends can print it at home, share it with Friends, keep it by their bedsides. Feel free to adapt it—let the resonances between *WCTS?* authors and your own prayer life continue. On the next two pages are excerpts. Thanks to Mike Resman and Judy Lumb for providing a lovely setting for my evolving prayer.

An Evolving Rote Prayer, Recited in the Morning

Mariellen Gilpin

*I praise and love and adore you, Jesus,
For this wonderful, marvelous gift of being prayed-through by you,
And for your suggestion I invite you to do so.
Yours was the first motion.*

*I now praise and love and adore you for this opportunity
To renew my blanket invitation to you,
To pray through me
For whoever, whatever, whenever, wherever, however thou wilt.
Do with me what thou wilt.*

*Only give me this one grace,
Never to lose faith in you,
Never to fear for myself,
Or complain of the way you treat me.
I praise and love and adore you for this opportunity to renew my invitation,
If it be thy will,*

*To pray through me particularly for [a couple dozen special souls, named one by one].
I praise and love and adore you for this opportunity to renew my earnest entreaty,
And my celebration, that you help me day by day,
To dedicate this wonderful, marvelous gift of being prayed-through
Entirely to loving and serving and pleasing you. ...*

*I praise and love and adore you for making available
The positive forces of self-knowledge, self-awareness, clear boundary setting,
Diligence, humility, trust, compassion for self as well as others,
Love and peace, truth, wisdom, courage and patience,
Humor and objectivity, strength and faith.
For helping us release some of the negative forces within.
And especially, Jesus, for being with us.*

*Since you are with us, no matter what happens, it will be all right.
For helping us be with you, so that everything becomes worship and service.
For helping us each find our unique and special place in the life of the Meeting.
For helping us each live our lives so in harmony with your ways
That others are attracted to a life in God too.
For helping us each live in your life and power,
Which takes away the occasion of all wars.*

*For helping us each live in right relationship with your life and power.
For helping us become your loving and listening friends and companions.
For helping us know,
Ever more deeply in every nook and cranny of life,
Your loving friendship and companionship.
For taking any mistake we make and helping us turn it into good and use it.
For helping us listen for and follow your guidance for our lives.
For helping us forgive each other and listen each other into wholeness.
And especially, Jesus, for uniting that of God in us,
For helping us nurture that of God in each other,
For giving us each other to help us lead spirit-led lives together,
For blossoming forth in our midst. ...*



WCTS Editor Mariellen Gilpin was interviewed on "Keepin' the Faith" November 25, 2007.
<will.uiuc.edu/am/ktf>

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*I praise and love and adore you for the gift of this hunger for your presence,
 Hunger for prayer,
 Hunger for worship,
 Hunger for a little spiritual community
 In which we may be known and loved,
 And nurture one another in the life of your holy spirit.
 I praise and love and adore you for this hunger to hear your word spoken in our midst,
 For raising up ministers and spiritual nurturers who will share your word with us,
 And for helping us nurture one another
 So that we may all become ministers and spiritual nurturers in your service.
 I praise and love and adore you
 For helping your messages come through
 In the mind and heart of the speaker and the listener,
 And in the lives of Friends everywhere,
 And for helping us listen for your word,
 Hear it when it is spoken,
 And nurture one another
 So that we may all become ministers and spiritual nurturers in your service. ...*

*I praise and love and adore you
 For the gift of your amazing, abounding and abiding great love,
 Poured out upon many for the forgiveness and redemption of sins,
 And for our great joy;
 For the love of friends and family, which is a reflection of your great love,
 For the courage and strength and sustenance, support and instruction
 You make available through your great love;
 For all the great good gifts of your holy spirit,
 Made available with such abundance,
 And unfolding like flowers in our experience,
 Particularly the gifts of life, great faith, great prayer, great love,
 Great adoration, great gratitude, great holiness,
 Great obedience, great humility,
 Great courage and sensitivity and creativity. ...*

*I praise and love and adore you for all your gifts
 Strengths and weaknesses alike;
 For our strengths are all also our weaknesses,
 And you turn our weaknesses into strengths
 in your service.*

*I praise and love and adore you for helping
 us dedicate
 All our strengths and weaknesses
 To loving and serving and pleasing you. ...*

*I praise and love and adore you
 Praise and love and adore you,
 Praise and love,
 Praise and love,
 Praise and love and adore you.*



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February 2010

A Covenant with Creation

Editor: Patricia McBee

Everywhere we turn we are hearing about our planet in peril, global warming, degradation of air and water, extinction of species. How do these changes in the world affect your soul? Do you feel a special longing or drawing toward a new relationship with the natural world? What practices do you have to help you move toward right relationship with all of creation? How does the environmental crisis affect your relationship with the Divine and how does your relationship with the Divine guide your response to the environmental crisis?

Deadline: November 15, 2009

May 2010

Addiction and Grace

Guest Editor: Jacqueline Hannah with Mariellen Gilpin

Sometimes addiction is part of our Spirit work. Do you live in addiction—with God? Did Spirit reveal your addiction to you? How does God help you live one day at a time? Has God shown you what triggers the addiction? Has God helped you when you've blown it—yet again? What spiritual gifts come from your addiction? Tell us your stories of addiction and grace.

Deadline: February 15, 2010

August 2010

Questioning

Guest Editor: Judith Favor with Michael Resman

In the beginning, God asks Adam and Eve, "*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:9). The First Question seeks relationship, inviting us into communion. What questions has God asked you? What has been your journey to answer the question? Have you asked God a question, and what was the divine response? How did God's response come about? How has your relationship to God changed as the result of a question? Tell us about your conversations with God, and what you have learned from them.

Deadline: May 15, 2010

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