

What canst thou say?

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

Friends, Mystical Experience, and Contemplative Practice

Number 29: February 2001

EXPERIENCING THE SPIRIT IN QUAKER BUSINESS PROCESS

A SPACE WHERE TIME DID NOT EXIST

by Nadine Hoover

I remember going to meeting for business at Lois Smith's house when I was a child. We'd walk from the chapel past a couple of houses under the trees and down the short walk. In the front entryway the smell of fresh baked pastries, hot cider, and teas enveloped each one of us as a personal embrace. I knew those smells were there just to greet me. I remember stepping into the front room with the sunlight streaming in the window. The adults sat quietly around the room.

Clarence Klingensmith was clerk. One of my most common occupations in meeting was to watch Clarence to see if he moved — ever. If my eyes wandered from him I would anxiously wonder if I had missed the one twitch, the one shift. But as my eyes came back, there he was, exactly as I remembered. I realized if I could just watch him, then I could sit much stiller than I could on my own.

In meeting for business, Clarence moved — occasionally. But he seldom spoke. It was soft, quiet, gentle. There was a stillness, lots of space, room to consider, room to ponder. If decisions came, they came naturally. They weren't conjured or demanded; they appeared of their own in the course of things. "Oh, look here. Is this an answer?" "Well, my, my, here it is."

I don't remember what we did as kids, except I remember sitting on the floor beside the couch or under the refreshment table. There were no toys; I couldn't run. But I loved to go. It was a place where we were all together, where people talked about things that mattered, where everyone listened, where time did not exist, and where we were all shaped and guided in that still, gentle, powerful force that was the people, the love, the truth, the sunlight, and the hot cider. I loved being there.

 *Nadine Hoover is a member of Alfred, New York, Meeting. She enjoys working with the Young Friends in Western New York and traveling among Friends.*

Are your meetings for worship and business held in expectant waiting for divine guidance? Is there a living silence in which you feel drawn together by the power of God in your midst? Queries from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Faith and Practice, 1955

A COVERED COMMITTEE MEETING

by Rita Varley

My story happened about 20 years ago, when I was a new and earnest clerk of Worship and Ministry in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. An agenda item for the upcoming meeting, placement of the facing benches in the meeting-house and who should sit there, promised to be a controversial one with strong opinions on several sides. I wanted to clerk it skillfully. I prayed for God's help and guidance and waited for clues and answers from God.

Two weeks before the meeting, God seemed to be raising up the importance of keeping "truth" in mind, and the next week "love" seemed to be the theme. The evening of the meeting, I arrived early. As I meditated on these a new level of understanding of truth and love rose in my mind. I felt ready for whatever might ensue.

I introduced the topic with a few words on remembering love and truth as we tackled it together, and wondered if I might be moved to speak more. But a curious and unforgettable thing happened. I had the distinct feeling that God asked me not to say another word, but to watch closely — and very quietly. It seemed to me that the Holy Spirit came and spread wings over the whole group, so that not one word any person said was able to exist outside that holy space.

As each person spoke, he/she gave truth and love to others inevitably, whether they were aware of giving or receiving it or not, whether they felt centered or not.

continued on next page

From the Editor;

We friends speak of our meetings for business as times when the Spirit is made manifest among us. Does it really work that way? Do people feel a palpable sense of the Spirit in business meeting? My curiosity inspired the topic for this issue of WCTS. I have been warmed by the many answers to my questions.

The Friends who share with us in this issue show us the Spirit in many guises: the dramatic shift noted by all present, the shift in an individual perhaps unnoticed by others, the sense of the Spirit's constancy in business meeting month after month. Sometimes the work of the Spirit among us is so subtle or so ordinary that we may miss it or take it for granted.

Thank you, Friends, for showing the Spirit at work among us.

Patricia McBee, editor for this issue

could see woundedness and fears under the most strongly held opinions, and these were being held in the light as a subtext to the acknowledged topic. The loving presence and movement of the Spirit among the people was so strong and beautiful that I was stilled in fascination to witness it. The agenda topic seemed almost to vanish as it became no more than the excuse for the deeper exchange of truth and love.

I don't know if others were aware of the Presence I sensed. I do remember how in each person's sharing I had felt love and truth and tender honesty moving between people. The issue of facing benches was gently dropped without much change as we moved to a deeper concern for the quality of ministry in our meeting.

I thought of Julian of Norwich's famous phrase about "All shall be well . . ." which is a statement of faith that we are held in God's love always. Our consciousness can forget it, but the forgetting does not nullify the truth of God's presence. Prayer had opened my eyes to it that night.

■ Rita Varley is a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting. She is known to many Friends around the country as the very helpful librarian in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting library.

NOURISHED BY THE SPIRIT

By Ginger Swank

Dry times are not uncommon for all of us who seek to remain refreshed and nourished by the Spirit. There, I've put down the first sentence intended to set the scene for me at the time. My children were little. My then husband was a workaholic. A sense of running in place stilled my soul's juices. I was losing my pride in being a Quaker. No recent experience had reached me. Even the fellowship of yearly meeting had gone only a millimeter of the way to restore my restless, empty sense of self.

That year, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting was held in Defiance, Ohio — a small place in the far left corner of the state. The terrain was as flat as my soul's horizon.

Yearly Meeting had proceeded normally. We had enjoyed the music of Susan Stark in arranged pockets of time. I remember learning the chorus "Spring Forth a Well." That song spoke to me.

One issue presented a question in some minds, but because some of the weightier Friends were apparently feeling positive about the issue there probably wouldn't be any discussion. The matter concerned a request for a rather large sum of money by a lady who was known to me. If I remember correctly the sum was \$2,000. The money was to help her set up a clinic in another state where she could counsel families who had problems with issues concerning violence.

That sort of request was not common. Our yearly meeting budget has always been bound to a modest agenda. The matter was brought to the attention of the Friends gathered for meeting for business after all other issues had been covered.

When it was first brought before the group it seemed like a done deal. My auctioneer's instincts had all but cracked the mental gavel to signal to me that the appropriate minute would be written, so be it, the funds dispersed, no questions . . .

Then a woman's voice quietly but firmly made some observations. She admitted that she didn't know the woman requesting the money, nor did she feel that she knew enough about the cause for which the money was to be used. Her very sincere if very unexcited voice had the effect of creating a spell. Other observations began what would be called a threshing session which lasted, if memory serves me, at least 90 minutes.

I can still with some clarity remember the atmosphere of the meeting. The questions and observations were all made clearly and succinctly and honestly with appropriate insight.

But what I brought out of that session which gave my soul a refreshing, needed boost was the feeling of the honest attempt to discern the will of the Holy Spirit. The woman and her husband going through the interrogation must have felt such a sense of the loving spirit that pervaded that room. Though they must have been exhausted, they couldn't have helped but also feel the very real sense of honest discernment.

I feel that our telling ourselves that no one is in authority among us stretches the truth because there is the influence of weighty or affluent Friends. When decisions are made by the process of group discernment, with many Friends' opinions being recognized and weighed, we keep the spirit of consensus that is our heritage.

There was never an attitude that the money would need to be specifically accounted for. If we were giving the money it would be freely given. On the contrary, the spirit of the threshing session was responsible discernment. It reminded me again that we are all equal in the sight of God and that accountability is not without the spirit of love.

continued . . .

What Canst Thou Say? is an independent publication by and for Quakers with an interest in mystical experience and contemplative practice. It's published in Aug., Nov., Feb., and May. The editorial team is Lissa Field, Mariellen Gilpin, Lieselotte Heil, Linda Lee, Patricia McBee, Roena Oesting, Amy Perry, Carol Roth, and Kathy Tapp. Subscriptions are \$8 for one year, \$15 for two years. Back issues are \$1.50 each and \$30 for a complete set. Subscription correspondence should be directed to Amy Perry at amyperryindy@yahoo.com or 6180 N. Ralston, Indianapolis, IN 46220.

We welcome submissions of 350-1500 words. Send submissions by e-mail to pmcbee@juno.com. If unable to send by e-mail, please send a diskette in Word or in generic text format, or typewritten copy to WCTS, 3208 Hamilton St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Please write for permission before reprinting excerpts.

That intense threshing session where people expressed their responsible concern for the use of money had the effect of boosting my previously hibernating soul to a level of reawakened pride in the mystery of Quaker process. The money was given to the couple to aid them in setting up the clinic. Responsible discernment was reached. The spirit of love was sensitively observed in the process.

 *Ginger Swank lives and attends meeting in Zanesville, Ohio.*



The practice of holding meetings for business following a period of worship opens up the way for a continuance of the state of religious fellowship experienced during such a period. The right conduct of these meetings, even in matters of routine, is important to the spiritual life of all: they are a part of the organized undertaking to promote the Kingdom of God, and services in them may be rightfully regarded as service for Him. The same reverent waiting that operates in the meeting for worship is also helpful in seeking divine guidance and unity of action in the transaction of business . . .

Friends believe, and have learned through experience, that God's will for the group can be ascertained if the group sincerely seeks for it. Unity can come into a situation when the Holy Spirit is allowed to work without hindrance or obstruction in the heart of everyone present.

*Faith and Practice
North Carolina Yearly Meeting
1982, Printing 39, pages 108-111*

TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT

By Ray Bentman

When I first started attending Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of Friends, I found the meeting to be in the midst of a huge and bitter argument. They were discussing whether to take marriages of people of the same sex under the meeting's care.

When I first attended meeting for business, where the arguments were most clearly expressed, I was appalled. The debate had been going on for seven years and seemed to have lost none of its vitriol. It was not at all what I expected from Quakers. And what seemed worse, some people in opposition to such marriages were presenting some of the worst stereotypes about gays and lesbians — generalizations that had been circulating in much of the world for a long time but that were patently false.

To be sure, the opposition came from a small minority. But Friends believe that to be approved any proposal must be in accord with the sense of the meeting. That is, there must be a sense that most members present are in agreement and that no one is strongly opposed to the proposal. There must be the sense that the spirit of the meeting is in accord, as a sign that

the will of the Holy Spirit is being expressed. And a minority was, with what seemed to be rather narrow-minded arguments, obstructing an important idea that was supported by most of the members.

After one particularly bitter meeting, I walked home thinking that I would just stop attending Quaker meetings. I had to deal with enough homophobia in the ordinary world without seeking it out. And I was impatient with the Quaker insistence on the sense of the meeting, which I interpreted to mean that every idea had to have unanimous approval and that nothing of importance would ever be approved.

At home, I told my partner of my decision to stop attending Quaker meetings. He is not a Friend, but he teaches at a Friends school and is a very spiritual person. He disagreed with my resolution. He said that Friends at least are dealing with the problem. Homophobia is everywhere but usually half-buried. Quakers had the courage to bring the issue out, to honestly air their thoughts and try to deal with honest disagreement. It is easier, to be sure, to live in a place where such thoughts are genteelly concealed. But unearthing the homophobia, expressing it, and dealing with it openly is the best way to resolve those disagreements, however painful the process may be.

I returned to attending the meeting, still unsettled. The issue was to be taken up once again at meeting for business. I went to that meeting rather in the spirit that I had attended City Council's meeting a number of years before, when they discussed including lesbians and gays in the anti-discrimination bill — interested in the outcome but not intimately involved in it. But at this month's business meeting the proposal was approved. When the Clerk announced his sense that the meeting was in accord with the minute, some started singing a hymn. I didn't know the hymn and still can remember only the first line, which went, "Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me."

To this day I cannot think of that moment without being deeply moved. The years of pain and struggle that had gone into this agreement showed itself with a truly spiritual light. This was no politically correct expression of the latest liberal fad. Rather, it came from deeply within the spirit of everyone present and of the group in genuine unity. I had never before felt so keenly the presence of the Holy Spirit.

After the Meeting for Business we went into the meeting for worship. The deep sense of commitment and love that glowed in the business meeting (itself a form of worship) was carried over into a meeting devoted exclusively to worship. Person after person, members and attenders, even some people who had just dropped in, rose to express their sense of the Holy Spirit's presence. One man, whom I had never seen before and have not seen since, rose to say that this was for him the most spiritual,

the holiest experience he could recall. It was truly a “gathered meeting” in the sense that all of us were thinking and feeling the same thing; we all felt that we had expressed the truth conveyed by the Holy Spirit, by “that of God in everyone.” Certainly God is always present in us. But most of us fully sense God’s presence only rarely. And it was almost miraculous that a room full of people could all have that feeling at once.

Shortly after that meeting, I applied for membership. I suppose I have not often experienced such a gathered meeting since then. But the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit that was granted to me that day has been with me ever since, strengthening my often-faltering belief. A meeting like that, I believe, rare as it is, transforms all those who are so fortunate as to be present.

✠Ray Bentman, a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting, is active on the Drug Concerns Working Groups of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

AN ANSWER COMES

By Jack Fogarty

The Sandy Spring Meetinghouse is old enough to have had a wooden partition to separate men and women. It was removed several years before we joined the meeting — and not without considerable consternation.

The meeting membership had grown and, particularly after the new school started using the meetinghouse for its graduations, a balcony was clearly needed. But the partition and a balcony were incompatible! The balcony/partition controversy raged on for several years and many business meetings. Expansionists and preservationists would not be reconciled.

Then one business meeting after silence had been called for during one such debate, S. Brook Moore rose slowly and said, “I see a balcony faced with the panels from the old partition.” The meeting let out a collective “O-o-o-o-o . . .” and the matter was settled. This is still cited as a prime example of “sense of the meeting.”

✠Jack Fogarty is a member of Sandy Spring Meeting. He lives in Columbia, Maryland.

The objective of the Quaker method is to discover Truth which will satisfy everyone more fully than did any position previously held. Each and all can then say, “That is what I really wanted, but I did not realize it.” To discover what we really want as compared to what we first think we want, we must go below the surface of self-centered desires to the deeper level where the real Self resides. The deepest Self of all is that Self which we share with all others. This is the one Vine of which we are all branches, the Life of God on which our own individual lives are based. To will what God wills is, therefore, to will what we ourselves really want.

Howard Brinton
Friends for 300 Years, page 109

THE SPIRIT TOOK OVER

By Patricia McBee

I had been clerk of my meeting for only a few months. I was still learning my way and the meeting was still getting accustomed to me. We were discussing a matter which had become contentious over several months, beginning in the previous clerk’s tenure. The meeting had divided itself into “sides” — for and against.

As clerk I suggested that those who had concerns about the proposal should speak first. That way, with the concerns out on the table, the proponents could respond to them. Perhaps I would have handled it differently if I had been a more experienced clerk. Or perhaps after the meeting had come to know and trust me as clerk, they would have had greater confidence in my evenhandedness. But that is not how it was on that day.

After listening to several people raise their concerns, one of the proponents just couldn’t listen to any more of what seemed to him to be relentlessly one sided. He asked to be recognized and when he spoke he sounded very angry. I observed to him, “Peter, you sound angry.” To which he responded in a loud voice, “Your darned right I’m angry. I have never seen such poor and biased clerking.” He went on for several more lines and then announced, “I’m not going to stay here for any more of this,” and stomped to the door. Apparently on his way to the door he realized that he didn’t want to miss anything, so as he got to the door he turned and said in an ominous tone, “I’ll be sitting out here, and I’ll be listening.”

After he went out, I turned back to the meeting, and, in a centered and focused way, helped the meeting to continue speaking and listening to one another on this question. We made progress toward unity.

As we moved on to the next item of business and a committee clerk was making a report, I had a moment in which I didn’t have to be completely focused on the pulse of the meeting. I discovered that I was enraged. I was furious at Peter for having accused me of bias. I found myself resonating to his angry tone and wanting to give him a piece of my mind. I even had thoughts of doing something physically violent. Then I took a breath and refocused on the report that was being presented.

Later, I was amazed at how the Spirit had taken over the clerkship and kept me focused on what the meeting needed after Peter had walked out, rather than allowing me to be overwhelmed by my own emotional reaction.

Over the years since then, Peter and I have become good friends. The matter the meeting had been discussing was gradually resolved. Over time I became a more skillful clerk. But I have never been more aware of the Spirit’s intervention than I was on that afternoon.

✠Patricia McBee is a member of Central Philadelphia Meeting. She is on the editorial team of *What Canst Thou Say?*

A GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

By Tony Fitt

One time two members of our meeting had an argument and accused others of lining up against them. They were two very strong and very different personalities, and as the gap between them grew wider they were beginning to divide the meeting. It got nasty.

The elders discussed what we should do and we came up with the idea of a clearness meeting (the first we had ever held). I clerked it. We tried in regulated ways to let each person say what was troubling them; then we had silent worship; then they spoke again; then the elders spoke and we wound it up.

I knew the amount of bitterness and hurt that both the Friends felt and I realized that the only hope was to believe that they could feel the spirit and be moved by it. I didn't know what I was doing, but I prayed hard before the meeting, realizing that there would only be one chance to resolve this conflict and that we had to get it right.

When we met, there was a great sense of compassion and loving support in the group and I know I was guided. I was able to find words which came to me from the spirit, but we found the silence just as eloquent. It went well.

Both parties are still in the meeting and both were moved by that experience. Others felt that God gave me a gift in that moment.

✠ Tony Fitt is a member of Cornwall Monthly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting. He is currently traveling among Friends in Europe as Executive Secretary to the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

THE SPIRIT'S BUSINESS

by James Baker

I am so astonished by some Friends' comments that their meetings for business are less than they could be. I find meeting for worship with a concern for business in my meeting to be so far in advance of those in the secular world in which I participate that it is a joy and relief to meet with Friends.

We have struggled with same-sex marriage issues, are working through meetinghouse accessibility challenges, and have all the mundane details of too much to do and too few people. In all these events I cannot remember a time when the Spirit did not move, and move powerfully.

Is it because we are small (about 20 people commonly)? Is it because we start and end with silence? Is it because we are blessed with people of good humor? Is it because we are free enough to laugh or be moved to tears? Is it because we truly care for each other? Perhaps all of these are factors. I do know that, if I had to choose, I would almost be willing to miss meeting for worship rather than the time when Friends attend to business, for that seems to be the place where the Spirit is present in action.

✠ James Baker celebrates the work of the Spirit as a member of Downer's Grove Meeting, Illinois Yearly Meeting.

What Canst Thou Say?

LETTERS

OPTING TO LIVE

Carol Roth, a member of the WCTS editorial team, sends her deep gratitude to those who responded to the call for prayers in the last issue of WCTS. She has sent us the following report on how the Spirit is finding her as she recovers from orthopedic surgery and lives with Barretts Syndrome, a painful and potentially fatal condition of the digestive tract.

I have decided to opt to live. For a while there I let myself get so tired of the pain that I really became depressed. Having had experiences wherein I have been to other levels and know of the peace and beauty that awaits, I began to yearn to go home where pain would be gone. But something happened this past week that has turned my entire thought system around. What I am going to relate is just an incident but boy, what it did to my soul is amazing.

On a windy day last week our overhead gutters were clogged with leaves, and I wanted to spare my mailman hubby, Martin, more work. After surgery on my shoulder I couldn't move my arm to use the wire brush to sweep out the gutters, so I asked my daughter Morgan to help.

Morgan is 20 and lives at home while attending college. She was born with what are called essential tremors. Fine tremors run through her body, especially her hands, constantly. She is also a tiny slip of a girl, weighing at the most ninety pounds. We got out the ladder and since I couldn't sweep out the gutters, Morgan got onto the top rung of the ladder. My role was to stay under her, holding onto her legs, which were shaking just as much from the cold wind as from her tremors.

We did the entire back of the house. We moved around to a one-foot section on the side where the drain spout came out of the gutter. In only a moment we would be done, back into a warm house for lunch and hot tea. I said to Morgan as I looked up at her, "Be careful, honey. Don't let the wire brush fall into the downspout." A second later came the thunkety-thunk of the long-handled wire brush going down the downspout.

She looked down at me, her eyes wide with disbelief. I helped her down off the ladder, where we both collapsed in laughter, sitting on the cold ground, just hugging each other, laughing like crazy. I bet we sat there for fifteen minutes, hugging and laughing.

We knew we had to get the wire brush out from where it was stuck, in the curve of the drain spout as it neared the pavement. But how? It was a stiff wire brush with a very long handle. The curved end of the downspout was riveted together, not screwed or bolted. If we left the brush in, the spout could be clogged with ice come winter.

I asked Morgan to unwind the hose and drain the water out. I had the idea that the hose would be flexible enough when free of water. I would put it in the down-spout underneath the brush

and push it straight up until the brush popped out of the top of the downspout.

Morgan drained the hose and brought it over to me. So I took the hose in hand and stuck my right hand in the spout with the hose.

Good. There were the stiff bristles of the wire brush. This would be so easy . . .

My hand got caught. It was caught in between the wire brush and the hose. I tried to slide it out. No way. The wire bristles were cutting into it. The hose was up against my hand, and there was no way to get my hand out. Morgan said, "Mom, what's wrong?" I replied, "My hand is stuck. It is really, really stuck. I can't get my hand out."

She plopped down next to me. We looked at each other and started to laugh again. We howled, we giggled, we laughed and laughed. The wind was fierce and we were so cold and yet, I was so happy because I felt so grounded in the sense of the moment we were caught in. My daughter's eyes were beautiful, her laughter so rich and full. The wind was delicious. I was fully human, fully alive, totally in tune with the earth, with the soul beside me. I wasn't thinking of being far away from pain, of leaving the earth. I was filled with love for where I was, who I was as a human being, and I knew that I wanted to feel the cold, the wind against my face. I wanted to be here when Morgan graduates. I wanted to live . . .

I asked Morgan to go into the house and call 911. We needed help. She wanted to know what to say and I said, "Just tell them that your mom has her hand caught up in the downspout. We'll take the police, a plumber, just send some help." Morgan was aghast. "Oh, Mom, just keep trying to free your hand, just try once more."

I did. And it worked. I managed to ease my scraped hand out, pushed the hose against the wire brush and there it went, the brush popped out of the top of the downspout. We did it! Success. Hugging, laughing, now exhausted, we entered the house.

When the wire brush flew upwards out of the top of the drain spout, it was as though something that was clogged inside of my own soul simply burst through as well. This seems so silly. But it was a turning point for me. I opt to live. There is such conviction in me now. I have chosen to live; I will live with full attention and full awareness of the time I have to spend here. I will live in attention, in awareness, in appreciation that I am just as human as I am spiritual. I will work to help the healers help me, and I will do the best I can to live a life filled with humor and awe.

Love,
Carol



There is but one Light and one Truth, if the Light of Truth be faithfully followed, unity will result. . . . The nearer the members of a group come to . . . one Light, the nearer they will be to one another, just as the spokes of a wheel approach one another as they near the center.

*Howard Brinton
Friends for 300 Years, page 106*

A VISION AND A TASK

By Barbara Rondine

Instead of processing the basil I have already picked, I am led to write my first contribution to a publication that I recently discovered through email with another Quaker: I have since recommended it to friends because of the thoughtful concepts discussed.

As I put away the last issue I was struck with the November topic of Visions and Voices. I have had one vision — so short that I am not sure others would classify it as such, but the powerful flooding of joy and relief was my signal of authenticity. I was preparing for surgery for cancer by having a Healing Touch session. Through alternating tears and comfort, I was startled by a golden orb that suddenly appeared not in the palm of my hand, but nestled against my thumb. With this appearance came a voice saying, "You have a task to do." The words were full of love, support and promise; if I had a task to do, it signified to me that I would survive the surgery that was petrifying me.

I have been seeking my task now for the past two years, finding a new ease to life, a rich fullness to each day, a beginning "knowing" yet not fully understanding, of a new way to experience daily life. I am in a delightful connection to my Higher Power, finding him/her/it in nature and during meaningful interaction with people who are open to this seeking/searching/finding/celebrating similar life issues.

The voices that speak to me are those that fill my interior sense of being when I am quietly walking or sitting in nature, the stroke of breeze reminding me to look, to feel, to celebrate the breath of life. The touch of sun on my skin bids me marvel at the detail of color and shape of all that is around me. I am spellbound by the most ordinary: my cat drinking water, my dog stretching in the morning, a bird song, a flower. I live in the greatest appreciation and a great patience. I seem to be living in the question, for I have not comprehended my task — or have I?

As I write I begin to see a pattern, not of what to do for my task, but how to be, how to live! Perhaps the particulars of place and work are less important than I thought. Maybe the foundation of love, openness and appreciation are my task, and a more delightful one I cannot conceive.

Barbara Rondine lives in Spokane, Washington. This article arrived too late for the November issue on Visions and Voices.

CENTERING IN THE MIDST OF DISTRACTIONS DURING WORSHIP

Submitted by Mariellen O. Gilpin

Urbana-Champaign Friends held a worship-sharing on this theme Sunday, October 29, 2000, after worship. Here are some of the methods people reported for dealing with distractions during worship.

- Sometimes our task for the morning becomes not letting the distraction bother us. Being bothered, not the distraction, is the problem.
- When our bodies are uncomfortable and in pain, centering prayer helps immensely. Just repeat a name of God (preferably one syllable) on your breath.
- Remember that the distracter, whether it be a person or a passing motorcycle, is a manifestation of God. Don't try to ignore the distraction (ever tried not-thinking about a hippopotamus?). Trying to ignore something makes it more obtrusive than ever. It's best to embrace the distraction and make it part of the worship experience. If the ticking of a clock obtrudes on worship, reflect on what the clock tells us about God, and pretty soon we are lifted up in thoughts of God.
- Center every day at home. On Sundays distractions will then intrude less in worship.
- Just gently observe the distracter while holding the person in the Light. Holding in the Light fills one with joy, compassion and love for the person. It can make a permanent change in our relationship to the person.



SUBSCRIPTION FORM.

Please send this form to: WCTS, c/o Amy Perry, 6180 N. Ralston, Indianapolis, IN 46220.

Enclosed is my check to What Canst Thou Say?

_____ \$8 for a one year subscription

_____ \$15 for a two year subscription

Enclosed is a contribution of \$ _____

I cannot afford \$8. Enclosed is _____. Please keep me on the mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, zip _____

RESOURCES

RESOURCES ON SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Submitted by Jennifer Elam

In my research on spiritual experience this fall I have become aware of several resources that I would like to share with you. I am happy to find others attempting to bridge various theoretical orientations of medicine and psychology (such as cognitive psychology) with spirituality. I would love to hear from others. You can write to me at Jenelam@aol.com

On a recent trip to England, I visited the *Alistir Hardy Religious Experiences Research Center* at the University of Wales in Lampeter. They have been collecting stories of religious experience since 1969. They have an archive of over 5,000 stories. You can pay a membership fee of about \$35 then can read the stories. I found the stories rich and I felt blessed to find such diversity in the work of the Spirit as well as validation of so many stories having much of the same content as I read in WCTS. The contact person is: Peggy Morgan, e-mail: sto38@lamp.ac.uk

I then attended a conference called "*Psychosis and Spirituality: Exploring the New Frontier*" at the U. of Southampton Medical School. The presenters were mental health professionals seeking to treat religious experiences more respectfully (for example, questioning the professional practices of labeling much of what we experience as religious delusion). They have a book coming out soon (same title) which is available from Whurr Publishers Ltd., 19B Compton Terrace, London, NI 2UN. E-mail: info@whurr.co.uk

Next was a conference on "Spirituality, Psychotherapy, and Healing" in New York sponsored by the *Center for Spirituality and Psychotherapy* at 330 West 58th Street, Suite 200, NY, NY 10019; (212) 582-1792; www.psychospiritualtherapy.org

David Lukoff is a psychologist at Saybrook Institute who co-authored the changes in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition, in 1994 to include "Religious or Spiritual Problems" as a condition that comes to the attention of clinicians. He has an on-line course on Spiritual Emergency at: www.Blackboard.com/courses/. Course ID is: IGL250.



The heart of contemplative practice to me is learning to use our attention to lead us to an alert, radical, open awareness. . . . Meeting for business can become both part of a collective search for and expression of insight and at the same time be part of my individual practice."

Jim Flory

Western Quaker Reader, page 282

UPCOMING ISSUES

May 2001: SOLITUDE.

EDITOR: LINDA C. LEE

We may come to solitude through following our yearning, through circumstances of fate, or may choose it as a deliberate practice. Has solitude enlarged your soul, expanded your awareness, fulfilled your yearning? Has solitude led toward knowing “that of God” within? What relationship have you found between solitude and service? Has the value of spending time alone changed during your spiritual development?

DEADLINE: MARCH 1.

August 2001: FORGIVING.

EDITOR: MARIELLEN O. GILPIN

Sometimes forgiveness happens in an instant, a moment of grace. Sometimes it is a process, where the old angers boil up time and again, and we choose again and again to let them go. Sometimes the person we need most to forgive is ourselves. However it happens, it’s all God’s work. Tell us your stories of forgiving, and what you have learned about a forgiving God.

DEADLINE: JUNE 1.

November 2001: KUNDALINI ENERGY

EDITOR: KATHY TAPP

Kundalini is the Sanskrit word for the spiritual power within each person. According to yogic science, this power lies dormant at the base of the spine. When activated, it rises through the chakras to the crown. People undergoing a Kundalini rising often experience energy surges in the body, inner light, inner sounds, heat, and mystical and psychic phenomena. Some people consider the word “Kundalini” as another name for the Holy Spirit. Have you had experiences which you feel are caused by this energy? What has helped you in dealing with these experiences? How have you integrated them into your spiritual paradigm?

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 1.

Please write for WCTS

What Canst Thou Say is a worship sharing group in print. Its richness comes from the generous sharing of readers with one another. Articles of 350 to 1500 words can be submitted by e-mail to pmcbee@juno.com. By submitting electronically you save your volunteer editors the work of retyping your manuscript. If you cannot send by e-mail please send a disk, in Microsoft Word or generic text format, or your paper copy to Patricia McBee, 3208 Hamilton St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. Thanks!

What Canst Thou Say?

c/o Amy Perry

6180 N. Ralston

Indianapolis, IN 46220

Address Service Requested

In This Issue:
Experiencing the Spirit
in Quaker Business Process