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# 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*

## Vibes

### Healing House

I live in a house filled with healing vibes. It is the old house on Snipes Farm. I first came here in 1963 when I was ten years old. My family was disintegrating. My father had abandoned us, and my mother was descending into a deep and calamitous depression. We had lived in a wealthy community just outside of New York City, and because of the separation my mother and we four siblings ended up in a rented house in Levittown, Pennsylvania, on welfare.

In the fall of that year I entered 5th grade and by chance sat next to Dimitre. He asked me what religion I was and I told him I was a Quaker. He immediately said “No, you’re not.” I said, “How do you know?” He said, “Because you don’t come to meeting.” He then proceeded to tell me about the kid’s paradise known as Falls Friends Meeting. He said that it was a great place with lots of families and kids, and that everyone had a ton of fun. He said that coming up soon would be a huge party for leaf raking. One of the families lived on a farm and would bring a big horse-drawn wagon that we would use to move the leaves. I went to the leaf raking party and that Sunday I attended Falls Meeting for the first time. I have been attending ever since.

I soon became acquainted with the Snipes Family. They were really two families, brothers who were raising their families on the sprawling family farm. Sam and Barbara Snipes had six children and were in the habit of inviting everyone to the farm and making everyone feel welcome. Snipes Farm, and Sam and Barbara’s house particularly, became my refuge from my broken family. Barbara was a most welcoming person and became a spiritual mentor to me throughout my life. When you walked into her house, you just felt welcomed. You felt and she always reinforced the feeling that you could come here any time and stay as long as you liked. I started coming almost every weekend and spending as much time as I could through most of my teen years. I felt so welcome that it seemed like home to me. Barbara seemed to sense the confusion and sadness that

*George Price*

pervaded my life. However, as a 10-year-old, I didn’t show it and seemed to most people to be a happy kid.

Throughout the years, the Snipes home was a refuge for many people. It is a large house and there was always an extra place for someone to stay if they needed it, particularly young people, but not only young people. In 1968, Eugene McCarthy was running for president, pledging to end the Vietnam War. Thousands of college kids got involved. The Snipes home became a hostel for University of Pennsylvania students volunteering in the Bucks County campaign. I was 14 and very excited to be involved, and meet these college kids and stay up late talking about issues. Other young people who needed a place to stay for a while came too. Sometimes women who were escaping troubled marriages came. Many people over the years stayed here for anywhere from a night to a few years. Some were refugees; some were activists—many were both. All got treated to Barbara’s uncanny ability

### From the Editors:

*Robert Barclay described God as “a most pure and glorius spirit. ... [S]hall not He and His will be clearly felt according to His nature, that is, by a spiritual and supernatural sense?” Vibes are defined as “a distinctive emotional quality or atmosphere that is sensed or experienced by someone” (freedictionary.com). This issue contains many examples of vibes: of places, of sore muscles, as Friends’ auras in worship. Perhaps we perceive God’s vibes the same as we do the vibes of place and of other humans. We hope you enjoy this issue.*

*— Judy Lumb and Earl Smith*

**What Canst Thou Say? (WCTS)** is an independent publication cooperatively produced by Friends with an interest in mystical experience and contemplative practice. It is published in August, November, February, and May. The editorial and production team is Muriel Dimock, Lissa Field, Mariellen Gilpin, Judy Lumb, Grayce Mesner, Rhonda Pfaltzgraff-Carlson, Mike Resman, Earl Smith, and Eleanor Warnock.

Tell us your stories! **WCTS** is a worship-sharing group in print. We hope to help Friends be tender and open to the Spirit. Articles that best communicate to our readers focus on specific events and are written in the first person. We welcome submissions of articles less than 1500 words and artwork suitable for black and white reproduction.

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## WCTS has Two Blogs

1) After the first gathering in 2013, the What Canst Thou Say? editorial team started a blog to prepare for the next gathering. In the midst of the first gathering of "Friendly Mystics," there arose a leading through Rhonda Pfaltzgraff-Carlson that we were to "name the spiritual condition of the world." This was very challenging for the organizers, so we created Quaker Mystics: Gathering for Discernment of God's Guidance <[quakermystics.wordpress.com](http://quakermystics.wordpress.com)> to process our response to this leading. Recent posts on this blog include the registration and information about future gatherings and the epistles from gatherings.

2) Soon after creating the Quaker Mystics blog, the editors found the need for another blog to support the journal What Canst Thou Say <[worshipsharinginprint.wordpress.com](http://worshipsharinginprint.wordpress.com)>, to publish essays between quarterly issues, or those that were not appropriate for the journal. For example, Mariellen Gilpin wrote an eight-part series on "Detachment and Attachment" about what detachment is and how it can affect one's choices for the worse, about how attachment is not always helpful for our decisions. She shared some ways she has learned to help herself make better choices and suggested how—together—we might help one another heal.

If you would like to contribute to either of these blogs, contact Judy Lumb at [judy@lumb.com](mailto:judy@lumb.com).

to see the good in each one, and to affirm everyone at a deep level.

In 1986, I moved in with Sam and Barbara. Their children were all grown and moving on. We were a good fit because they wanted someone to help out, and I needed a place to continue my lifelong healing. I have had this house as a home base ever since.

In 2001, a couple of months prior to 9/11, Barbara died after a long struggle with cancer. It was one of the saddest times in my life. I miss her regularly. A couple of years later Sam, amazingly at 85, remarried. He and his new wife moved into another smaller house on the farm.

I took over the old house. I am sort of a house manager. I rent the house from the Snipes and rent rooms to cover the costs. In the ten years I have managed the house, I have had

many housemates, and the healing vibe created by Barbara continues to permeate. When I am showing the house to potential housemates, almost everyone comments on the pleasant feeling they get upon entering. I am the caretaker of a healing home.

**George Price** is a member of Fallsington Friends Meeting (formerly Falls Meeting) in Bucks County, PA. "I have been leading sweat lodges for over 25 years for Quakers and many others. I am a licensed social worker and have worked in schools and group homes with adolescents and young adults. I have been playing blues on harmonica for many years, and am currently working with a new band out of Lansdale, Pennsylvania. We are experimenting with using music as a community healing modality. I am the founder and director of Music at Snipes Farm, a production company that has been producing music festivals at Snipes Farm since 2003."

# The Cloud of Witnesses

Mariellen Gilpin

One Sunday I worshipped with the little meeting near my hometown. I could see the little graveyard outside the window of this old, old meeting-house, which has been there since the 1870's. This is what I said:

"I've been thinking a lot lately about that cloud of witnesses that Paul spoke of in one of his epistles. I like to imagine that people who have prayed a lot in a particular place all their lives like to hang out there after they die, while they continue to pray there.

"I have a friend in my meeting who grew up in multiple Russian orphanages. She first came to our meeting-house to sit with the Buddhist group who meets there on Mondays. She looked around and essentially—in my words—said to herself, 'Who *are* these people who worship in this place?' She felt the vibes, so to speak, and looked us up on the Web. She's been worshipping with us ever since.

"She spent last summer in Russia, doing some research. She looked up the Quaker meeting in Moscow, and felt those same vibes when she first walked through the door. The Moscow Friends rent their worship space, and nobody wants to rent space to Quakers in Russia, for fear of political repercussions. But in the early 90s, the Quakers helped an organization get started in order to teach life skills and provide education to those who "graduate" out of Russian orphanages. That is the organization that rents space to the Quakers in Moscow. And my friend felt the same vibes in that rental space that she did in our meetinghouse in Illinois. I ascribe those vibes to that cloud of witnesses.

"When my nephew Josh died very suddenly in 2009, his siblings knew Josh would want a Quaker memorial, even though my family is not Quaker. They asked to hold the memorial here in your meetinghouse. I'm not entirely clear what relation one of the attenders of the memorial is to me...something like, maybe, a step great-niece-in-law... who told her aunt after the memorial that she wanted to be a Quaker: 'The meetinghouse just spoke to me,' she said. What spoke? I think she picked up the vibes of the cloud of witnesses who have loved God in this place."

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## Auras and Vibes

Mariellen Gilpin

Friends' auras upon first walking into worship often appear harried and unformed to my eye. After half an hour or so, not only is the atmosphere in the worship room more centered and focused, but auras are brighter. They have expanded and become more well-formed.

The state of a Friend's aura also indicates whether he or she came in the door with heart and mind prepared for worship (and which of us are just sitting there). I try to pray for each Friend, adult and child, as they walk into the room. Several times during worship, I again gently hold each person around our circle before God. (I don't try to tell God what anybody needs. I do ask that Friends receive everything they need. I also include myself in that request each time I prayerfully scan our circle.)

My reward is that often the silence seems to become much deeper, much more focused, much earlier in our time of worship. Even the littler children seem inwardly quieter and more centered.

An aura may be a vibe made visible. A whole roomful of centered and focused worshippers may help each other both receive and generate information. It is not surprising to me that a roomful of inwardly silent Friends is often a meeting for worship with more and deeper speaking in worship.

Totally silent times of worship sometimes seem to be followed by a greater likelihood that an individual Friend seeks out a Friend for a quiet conversation in a corner. One of the kinds of information that may be conveyed in a vibe is which Friend may be able to help with a spiritual concern. Sometimes, too, I may be drawn to speak with someone after worship, only to learn the Friend has a pressing concern on her mind and heart. How did I know? I didn't. I simply was drawn to my Friend's side. Vibes. The opportunity made itself.

I may have once been witness to a moment of insight during worship. I happened to scan our circle when one Friend, who seemed particularly intensely focused, suddenly received a ray of Light directly to her crown chakra. I felt I'd witnessed a very private, intimate moment, and turned my eyes away. I also felt no drawing to my Friend's side; she was in God's care, and needed nothing from me.

*Mariellen Gilpin is a member of Urbana-Champaign meeting, Illinois, and has been an editor of WCTS since 1999.*



*Since God is a most pure and glorious spirit, when he operateth in the innermost parts of our minds by his will; shall not he and his will be clearly felt according to his nature, that is, by a spiritual and supernatural sense? For as the nature of God is, so is the nature of his will, to wit, purely spiritual; and therefore requireth a spiritual sense to discern it; which spiritual sense, when it is raised up in us by a divine operation, doth as clearly and certainly know the voice of revelation of the will of God, concerning any thing which God is pleased to reveal, however contingent, as the outward sense knows, and perceives the outward object.*

—Robert Barclay, “Possibility and Necessity of the Inward and Immediate Revelation of God” in *Truth Triumphant* (Volume 3, page 571)

## Vibes in a Jail and a Church

James Baker

There used to be a huge jail in Burnaby, British Columbia. I used to take books there for the prisoners’ library. The librarian was a good man, but there was a palpable sense of negativity and oppression about the place. One time after delivering books to the jail, I immediately went straight to our Anglican church (called Christ the King) and sat for a while. I started to cry because the vibes in the church—peace—were so precisely the opposite of the jail.

Before I became a chiropractic student near Chicago in early 1980s, I had known several people who were “sensitives,” who had an ability to be aware of impressions beyond normal senses. A chiropractic student who knew of my interest and involvement in such things told me his wife did “readings.” At first I demurred, but we became friends, and I eventually had many “readings” from her, with him as the “conductor.” They had been to the Philippines to investigate what were called “psychic surgeons.” Through an exploration of self-hypnosis,

they discovered that his wife could go into an altered state in which she could give “readings.” I had many from her about people with whom I felt a special connection. Her procedure required—beforehand—to explore “inside” what inner sense had triggered my interest and why I wanted information.

It turned out that, for me, this preliminary exploration enhanced my inner awareness, such that, eventually I needed no “readings” to know, when I met someone new, much about our prior connections and relationships. This still persists, enhanced as I pay inner attention, not only about people, but about places on earth, and history. I think we all have this ability if we only pay attention, a great opposite from the deadening effect of the current craze of handheld electronic “toys” that are destroying people’s sensitivity to their inner awareness. A parallel effect is the diminishment of true communication.

*James Baker is a “Friend Away” from his beloved Downers Grove (Illinois) meeting.*

## Nikola’s Hearth

David Blair

I walked inland from the coast of Kos, on the eastern rim of the Greek islands facing Turkey. The dirt road wound up into the hills. I came to a farm, nothing more than a small house and a field with melon vines crawling over the dry earth.

Something about this sight struck me, perhaps the incongruous green in this dry brown landscape. I stopped and addressed a man named “Nikola” outside the house in my minimal Greek. He invited me into his house.

The interior was whitewashed, spotless, filled with light. It glowed. I sat on a bench and Nikola served me a bowl of egg lemon soup. It was heavenly. We talked in pidgin Greek and English. I understood that he had a son living somewhere in the US and missed him very much.

I left with promises to be in touch, and I did write to Nikola for a year or two afterwards. Then the letters ceased. However, the memory of a house filled with light, of the pure goodness that Nikola served me—the soup, his welcoming love—has never left me.

Nikola has appeared to me again in meditations, as a spiritual guide and friend, someone who saw the light within me and whose light I saw, in those glowing whitewashed walls, a sunlit interior, a bowl of soup—and shining from within him.

*David Blair lives in rural New Hampshire, has taught in the public schools, and co-founded and directed the Mariposa Museum and World Culture Center in Peterborough, NH. Between 1985 and 1993 he lived in China, the Philippines and Vietnam. The inner journey has taken him to even more amazing places.*



## The Magic Prayer Room

Maurine Pyle

Over my lifetime I have had many experiences of connecting spiritually with people through my intuitive gifts. I am not exactly a spy, but sometimes I see or hear something hidden and mention it out loud, much to the surprise of my conversation partner. Recently I was visiting with a Quaker wannabe and answering questions about our worship style. I said, “It is sort of like a lyre.” I meant that like the individual strings of a lyre, our voices are plucked in vocal ministries that arise naturally and then harmony effortlessly emerges. She looked at me behind half-closed eyes and said, “Liar – I have been a liar all of my life.” Whoops! I did not really mean to trespass on her story. So I have an unusual gift of prompting truth from people.

Lately I have been meeting with new people in my apartment instead of coffee shops. Since I do not own a car, it is much easier for people to come to me than the other way around. I am in prayer for most of the day and part of the night. I am a contemplative, so my home has become a hermitage. If people are willing to enter my prayer space, they are most welcome. I think it must have gotten soaked in prayer, because people now enter my space and immediately begin to speak their truth. The other day I invited a local activist to meet with me about a project we are working on in our community. As he entered the door he said, “My best friend just died.” We set aside our business for a while and held his friend in the light. About two hours later a city alderwoman came to see me and as she walked into my apartment, she said, “My best friend just died.” Once again, we stopped so she could tell me stories about her long friendship and how much she will miss her friend. I do not have a shingle hanging on my door that says “Grief Counselor,” but people seem to know I am available to listen.

A few minutes ago I met a young Christian minister in my home to talk about a community project. We discovered many synchronicities in our stories. At the end he said, “I want to come back to see you soon and bring my wife and child with me.”

The magic prayer room is open for business. Come back anytime.

*Maurine Pyle is known as the Quaker Hobo, as she does not own a car and accepts rides from friends and strangers alike, listening to their stories along the way. Her home is in Southern Illinois, and she often roams around the world of Friends answering that of God in everyone.*

## Vibes in Intimacy

Mariellen Gilpin

Some years ago, I told a spiritual director that I was praying that I might grow into an intimate relationship with God. She looked at me very directly and said, “I know you are happily married. Only someone who is happily married would want an intimate relationship with God.” I have pondered that in my heart ever since. It is certainly true that my relationship with my husband is a great metaphor for how my relationship with God has developed. But what I want to write about feels like more than metaphor. It’s vibes in intimacy, with my husband and with God.

Loving couples in long-term relationships sometimes laugh in the same instant about the same memory, often an as-yet-unspoken memory. Without a word or perhaps as much as a look, my husband and I may know we have a sexual date to look forward to later in the day. I can be deeply focused on a writing task, yet become aware that my husband is standing silently nearby, kindly and patiently awaiting a natural break in my task for my attention to shift to him. I can know when my husband walks into the house that as soon as he finishes loading the refrigerator, he has a story to share about his adventures at the grocery. When one of us returns from an afternoon away from home, we spontaneously reach out for a lengthy restorative cuddle. What are these behaviors but responses to one another’s vibes, to which we’ve become mutually attuned?

I think it is vibes that are the basis of attraction, at whatever level we may be attracted to one another. I noticed in my 12 Step years that someone would say something insightful, or helpful or kind in the group, and our eyes would meet. Later, over coffee, that sense of mutual interest deepens. Maybe these vibes can provide information and cause connections to form.

For me these vibes manifested as a desire, really a compulsion, to pray for healing for others. My first experiences of healing energy caused me to respond scientifically—What can I do to replicate the phenomena? How can I harness this? How can I get control over it, to increase my own power?—for good, of course, but my own sense of what would be good for this person. I cared; I wanted to help, but on my own terms.

What have I learned about praying for healing? I learned that my prayer has to be free from my own agenda. I cannot mouth the right words unless my heart is where my words are. The only way is to be clear in that moment of prayer is that my love for God takes precedence over my love for the person(s) I am praying for. I have to be able to conclude a prayer for healing with “according to thy will.” I

have to accept God's will at that deep soul-level.

It only took me 30 years, and a million billion mistakes in prayer, for me to get my lesson. God in his/her great mercy made getting my lesson possible. God guided and loved me into health...then greater wholeness and stability...and then into the loving intimacy of unitive prayer—of being prayed through.

These experiences of intimacy with God have a clear component of vibes. Many of the same signposts of intimacy are present in this relationship with God that we celebrate about intimacy with another human. I may sense that God is non-verbally prompting a memory we both cherish. Sometimes in the midst of an intensely busy day I will know we have what amounts to a sexual date later in the day. I may be very focused on my writing task and then realize God is lovingly, patiently waiting for my attention. I know there is no need to apologize for not noticing God at my elbow sooner. Not only did God make me the sort of person who can really focus on what I'm doing, but God loves me as I am. I can be very needful of telling God about my day, and truly sense that God wants to listen and help me process my experience. And anyone who knows the restorative power of an embrace from one who loves us is also capable of knowing what the Psalmist was talking about when he wrote, "*He restoreth my soul.*"

I am left with the conviction at a heart-level that God and I share vibes, which God employs to receive and to generate information, to unite with me, to love me and restore me.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley  
of the shadow of death  
I shall fear no evil,  
For thou art with me.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall  
follow me all the days of my life,  
And I shall dwell in the Lord forever.*  
(Psalm 23)

## A Conversation Between Two Nervous Systems

Joan Cole

**M**y client is comfortably reclined in front of me, and my hands are gently exploring, perhaps creating generalized comfort. And then I feel the terrain shift in that leg, shoulder or arm. It's as if that place I'm touching is suddenly thickened, plumped up by lines of strain or effort. My nervous system says "Hello" to this place, and that greeting is transmitted through my hands.

There may or may not be a response right away. I stop, quiet, look inside and wait for an answer. The quiet itself creates a field of safety for the two nervous systems to greet. Eventually I get a sense, either, "This is not the right place," or "Yes..."

When it feels right, "Where do you need to go?" is usually the question my hands ask next. "How can I help?"

It answers, "Just a little more pressure going this way" or perhaps, "You are rotated too far inward."

I change the angle, the depth of my touch, perhaps stretch the skin one way or another. And wait. Just holding the space. Is this what it wants? Patience.

Then, a shimmer of movement. Very subtle. Nothing you could see. Nothing I could feel for the first few years I was in practice as a massage therapist. Nothing has happened yet, really. But that shimmer is the "Yes" of that nervous system responding. Keep holding. Be patient.

The tension unwinds in a wave. The muscle under my fingers relaxes—from end to end. The skin loosens. It is at peace. On to the next place.

~~~~~  
When I started my practice, I was much more mechanistic. Lots of theories that would let my former computer

programming mind puzzle out exactly what was wrong from a series of observations. Trigger point maps. Biomechanical chains. Proper alignments of parts. I was pretty good at it. I was looking for the most efficient and effective techniques, and I learned a bunch of them. Many involved deep aggressive touch.

But there were always people who didn't improve under that treatment. People whose pain problems weren't solved. Even though it was good enough to fix the simple run-of-the-mill problems we all experience, living in a world with too many chairs and too little movement.

In my collecting of different techniques, there were a few that I had studied that were much more gentle. Still mechanistic. Moving fluid. Causing fascia to supposedly shift form and unstick. Tricking the nervous system. All mechanistic in intent, but it took effort to slow down with these techniques and hold back on forcing.

Meanwhile I was studying Taiji, which is a martial art and mind-body-spirit movement practice that tells you things like "give up yourself and follow the opponent," to stick, listen, follow, without separation, without forcing, to follow, bend, then extend.

I wish I could say there was some dramatic moment when my own practice shifted, and I converted to doing bodywork without so much "doing". But it's really been more of a long gradual realization. As bodywork and Taiji practice have merged, I have been able to witness the conversation between two nervous systems. I'm simply there as a witness, a mirror and perhaps a megaphone for that nervous system. The other person is healing herself.

*Joan Cole is a pantheist and member of Weaving Women, a local eclectic neopagan ritual and study group based in Champaign, Illinois. "I have been on the fringes of alternative religions since the early 1980s. These days my spirituality is relatively formless."*

## The Oasis Within an Island

Earl Smith

About two decades ago, I had the opportunity to stay at what is known as Friends House, home of Chicago Friends Meeting. Friends House is in a section of Chicago that seems like an island, a suburb within Chicago-land. There was such a sense of peace in Friends House that I often stayed there on other visits.

Years later, I was invited to move into Friends House because the meeting decided an empty Friends House was a danger to the neighborhood. Visiting Friends often commented to me about the peace they sensed in that place. I continue to sense that peace, now that I have moved to Ohio, when I return to visit. Friends House is an oasis within an island within Chicago.

## Book Review

*Good Vibes Coloring Book* by Thaneeya McArdle. <amazon.com/Good-Vibes-Coloring-Book-Fun/dp/1574219952/ref=sr\_1\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1450157548&sr=8-1&keywords=good+vibes+coloring+book>.

Reviewed by Earl Smith

Thaneeya McArdle writes, “This isn’t just a coloring book—it’s also an invitation to play with doodles, shapes, and patterns.” McArdle says, “Coloring and patterning are relaxing, meditative activities that encourage self-expression, sending you on a creative adventure.” Her aim is to spark creativity and unleash the inner artist.

Before starting, either with markers, colored pencils, gel pens, watercolors, or crayons, McArdle provides the budding artist some information on patterning techniques, coloring techniques, color theory, and some examples of a finished design.

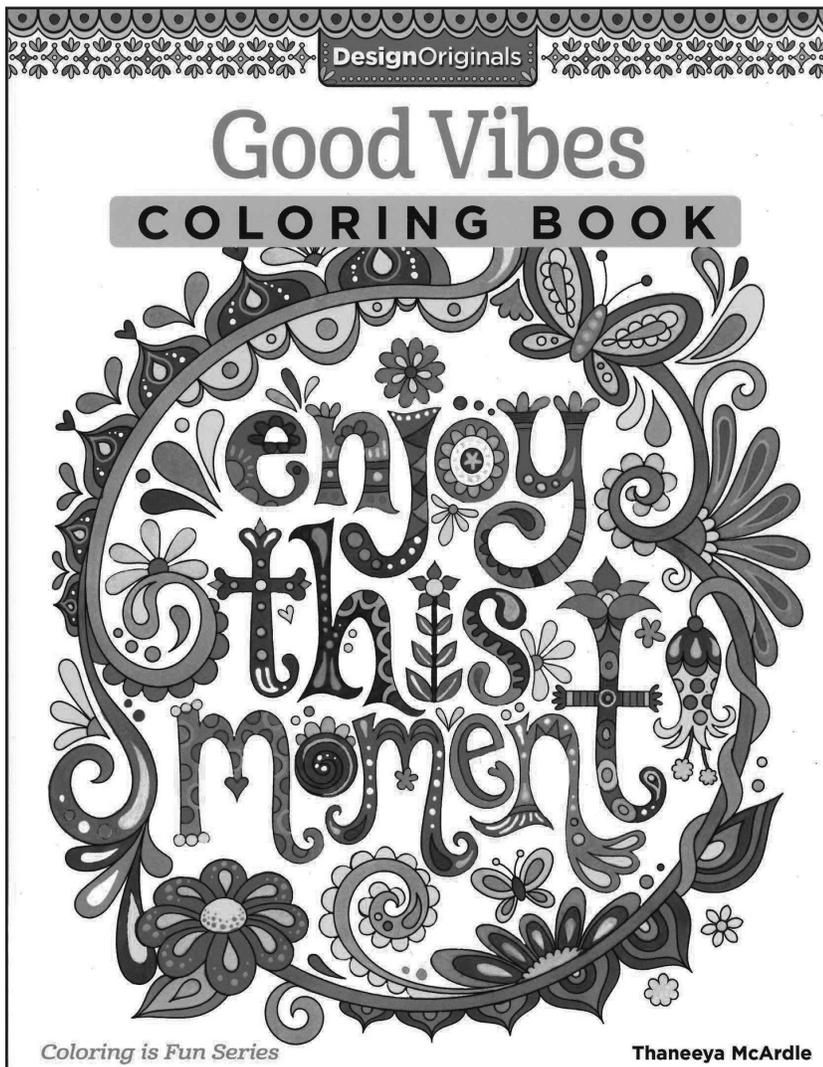
The book contains 30 whimsical art activities to send good vibes. On the back of each design is a quotation. For example, on the “Happy to Be Me” page is the statement by Byron Katie: “It’s not your job to like me—it’s mine.”

On the “Start Where You Are” page is an anonymous comment: “You are confined only by the walls you build yourself.”

On the “Spread Good Vibes” page is the remark from “The Lion and the Mouse” in Aesop’s Fables: “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”

On the “Onwards and Upwards” design (a hot air balloon) is the proclamation by Maya Angelou, “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

This coloring book is a good first step on that journey to thrive *a la* Maya Angelou.



## ***Immersed in Prayer*** ***The Next WCTS Book***

**Are you living a life of prayer?**

**Help support others' lives of prayer.**

*What Canst Thou Say* is gathering stories from prayer lives around the world for a book entitled "Immersed in Prayer." We hope to enrich the lives of others who are reaching to God through prayer. Submissions are invited focusing on one of the following queries. Multiple submissions are welcome.

*If you practice perpetual prayer, how did you learn it and what do you do?*

*What prompted you to decide to undertake a life of prayer?*

*What happens when you pray?*

*Whom or what do you encounter when you pray? What is their essence?*

*How would you describe the relationship you have with the one you encounter?*

*To what extent is it you or God that controls what happens while you pray?*

*Do you have nicknames for yourself or the Other?*

*How have your prayers changed over time?*

*What changes has prayer produced in you?*

*What part does prayer play in your life? What has it led you to do?*

*What does your prayer do for the world—physically, emotionally, or spiritually?*

*What are some of the signs of growth you notice in your prayer life?*

*What has helped grow your prayer life?*

*What impediments to prayer have you experienced?*

*What ways did you find to work around your impediments to prayer?*

*What suggestions do you have for those seeking to live a life of prayer?*

Submissions should be under 1,000 words of personal experience. Additional author guidelines can be found on the WCTS website at <[whatcanstthousay.org](http://whatcanstthousay.org)>. Submissions will be accepted through March of 2016. This is an international invitation. Given the editors' limitations, translations into English are encouraged, but not required. Send submissions or requests for information to Michael Resman <[resmanmh@aol.com](mailto:resmanmh@aol.com)>.

## ***Book Review***

***My Conversation with Sophia:  
Reflections on Wisdom's  
Contemplative Path***

by William Z. Shetter, Bloomington, Indiana:  
iUniverse.

Reviewed by Judy Lumb

Does not Wisdom call? (*Proverbs 8:1*)

William Shetter has shared his fantasized conversations with Sophia, a feminine face of God. "From everlasting I was firmly set, from the beginning, before earth came into being," (*Proverbs 8:23*).

She starts out by defining herself as spirit, "in all times and in all places, ... Shining light, I animate the whole of the cosmos; I reside in all created works. ... Wisdom is not accumulated knowledge, but insight."

Shetter was "musing on Wisdom's words in the Bible ... Before I quite knew how I got there, I was hearing more echoes: the timeless, eternal Wisdom is so vividly present, and so personified, in scripture books like *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, and in *Ecclesiasticus* and *The Wisdom of Solomon*" (in the Apocrypha).

Using a diamond as a metaphor, *My Conversation with Sophia* is divided into twenty-five facets of wisdom. Each facet can easily be used as a devotion to inspire contemplation. Some of the first few facets are: Attentiveness, Stillness, Simplicity, Self-awareness, and Growth.

The diamond metaphor is carried even further as Sophia says, "All people are diamonds ... Each contains and reflects all the others. The insight here lies in relationships; you are reflecting not only other persons, but all things. Your choices have more resonance than you can be aware of, and that imposes on you a moral weight; the Wisdom in you can only have creative energy if it rests on the presence of humility."

Every facet abounds with profound wisdom, all of which is contained within us. It is uplifting and daunting at the same time.

## Book Review:

### ***The Invention of Wings***

by Sue Monk Kidd

Reviewed by Maurine Pyle

On her eleventh birthday in 1803, Sarah was given ownership of a ten-year-old slave named Handful to be her housemaid. This novel follows their remarkable journey over 35 years in a complex relationship marked by guilt, defiance, estrangement and the uneasy ways of love. As an adult, Sarah leaves Charleston with her younger sister Angelina, hoping to find a better world in the North. Later they become early pioneers of the abolition and women's suffrage movements.

Sue Monk Kidd has undertaken a fictional account of one of the most famous Quaker activists, Sarah Grimke. Her true story is that she started out, not as a Quaker, but as a daughter of a wealthy slave owner in South Carolina. After rejecting her family and the slave culture she grew up in, she moved north to Philadelphia and eventually became a Friend. In fact, Sarah was eventually disowned by Arch Street Meeting for being too radical in her desire for the abolition of slavery.

We Quakers often like to point proudly to our heritage as participants in the abolition of slavery. We have not fully owned the truth that our forebears' engagement in anti-slavery work is more complex than that. Sarah Grimke's story challenges the notion we tend to hold that every Quaker ran the Underground Railroad or wanted to. She belonged to a risk-taking vanguard of women who were willing to face history and themselves in search of a higher truth. Not everyone endorsed her for it.

## Tasmanian Friends Buy Back Issues of WCTS

*Hi Mariellen and Richard,*

*Receiving the package of WCTS back copies in August was much appreciated and a great inspiration to me, and to a small group of Quaker and multi-faith contemplatives with whom I am sharing them. We are very grateful to those who make WCTS possible! Knowing others are on this same journey, really helps us to try to stay accountable to nudges from the Spirit—as well as to treasure our experience of God, however it comes to us. Perhaps we will be able to contribute at some point.*

*Rosemary Epps  
Clerk, Tasmania Regional Meeting (Australia YM)  
Clerk, Hobart Local Meeting*

### **SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

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## Please write for *What Canst Thou Say?*



May 2016

### **The Gift of Rest**

Editor: **Earl Smith and  
Judy Lumb**

*See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. (Matthew 6:28).* How do you find the right balance between work and rest, action and contemplation? What happened when you reduced your external commitments and spent more time in retirement? How have limits or limitations helped you to realize God's goodness? Tell us stories of balance and rest in your life.

Deadline: February 15, 2016

August 2016

### **Messages**

Editor: **Mariellen Gilpin**

*"When you get the same message from three different people, you might finally realize it's for you."* Share your stories of receiving messages from the Divine. How did the message happen? What made you decide it was a message for you? What has seemed to be the purpose of such messages, in your experience? What made you decide to follow the guidance given? Did it change your life, temporarily, or permanently, or both? What was the nature of the change, or changes?

Deadline: May 15, 2016

November 2016

### **Joy**

Editor: **Michael Resman**

*"Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God" (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin).* For those so blessed, spiritual joy flows quietly under all of life's events. Even when grieving, frightened, frustrated and angry, a loving connection with The One continues. What joys have you experienced in your spiritual life? How did that joy affect you on a day-to-day basis? What have you learned about spiritual joy experienced during times of struggle? Share your stories of encountering joy as part of your spiritual journey.

Deadline: August 15, 2016

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