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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*

Eldership

The Need for Eldering

Greg Woods

I have a concern about the lack of spirit-led eldering among contemporary Friends. Historically, Quaker elders encouraged the gifts of ministry and discernment and called to order those who disrupted worship. While some of these tasks have been absorbed into committees, we've lost much of the sense of eldership as a function. Our meetings need people to be elders. We need Friends who are willing to be elderd when needed. Ministers are not perfect, and elders can help ground those Friends who feel called.

Quaker meetings and churches should guide ministers and be a nurturing place for them, but meetings also need a way to challenge and hold accountable those in ministry. I myself have run away from eldering on several occasions.

After the last YouthQuake gathering in 2004, I gathered together some traveling Quakers to talk about the possibility of an event that might bring together young adult Friends across the divides of our religious society. While I found someone to join me in this work, it never got off the ground. But a remarkably similar event did occur four years later. The group that came together to organize this event were not part of the 2004 discussions. By this time, I was not ready to take on the leading, but the group had enough momentum and energy on its own.

While attending college, I became active in a wide range of activities and worthwhile projects. These projects led me to travel around the world and kept me on the move. Elders from my home yearly meeting would email and call me to offer friendly advice and ask me to seek a support committee. They worried that although I had good intentions, I was spreading myself too thin and not taking adequate time to attend to all I was doing. They tried to get me to re-center and become more focused on fewer projects. I rejected their eldering and, as a result,

had several periods of burnouts in the last two years of college. Looking back, I wish I had listened to them and formed a standing support committee at college to help guide my ministry.

Out of my experiences in ministry and watching others in ministry, I have learned that ministry does not only arise from one person or a small group all the time. That is why early Friends believed anyone could be called by God to minister at any time. If an individual or group is not sufficiently supported, the ministry will not disappear forever.

From the Editor:

Some consider "eldering" in negative terms, often due to conflicts elders had with ministers in the 1800s. However, eldering can come in many other forms and on different occasions as this issue shows. Greg Woods, who will be the guest editor of our November 2019 issue tells how eldering can possibly prevent burnouts. While many, if not most yearly meetings no longer appoint elders, there are Friends who function as elders by providing encouragement when we need it, by helping us to grow in our faith and get closer to God, in addition to praying for certain events such as a retreat. Thomas Clarkson, an Anglican deacon, gives us an idea of the elder's role in early Quaker life. Anne Scherer helps us to understand how showing kindness can be a form of eldering.

Earl Smith, Editor

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

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Sometimes I see that part of the ministry that one is called to is to struggle. In our struggles, we can learn more about our faith and our relationship with God. I have seen numerous situations in which people felt led towards a particular ministry independently of one another. Sometimes they joined together to forward this common vision; while in other situations, some went on to find other callings.

God works in mysterious ways. While being in ministry is about being faithful to God and to your own self, it is also about the community. I am wary of ministries that become focused on the glorification of an individual or a small group. Ministries are a way to live out God's Kingdom here and to help people see what is possible through God. Eldering can help us to ground our ministries in a community that can support and challenge one to go deeper. When we ground ourselves within a larger community, we can remind ourselves that the ministry is not about us, but about something much larger.

Greg Woods, a lifelong Friend, is a member of Columbia (Missouri) Meeting. Greg has served Friends in multiple ways. Currently he serves on the board of Quaker Voluntary Service, and he studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. He blogs at <reflectionsbygreg.blogspot.com>.

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Reflecting the Light Answering the Call

In any phase of the ministry we are reflecting—the light we find in others, the presence of Spirit, the light our elders have given us.

From October 6th to 9th, 2017, at the Cenacle Retreat Center in Chicago WCTS sponsored the WCTS Ministers/Elders Colloquium "Reflecting the Light: Answering the Call". The 29 participants gathered heard presentations by Paul Buckley, Jennifer Elam Lucy Davenport, Dan Davenport, and Fernando Freire. One Friend summed up the Colloquium as a "Love Banquet" and we are all taking home left-overs. The Proceeding of that Colloquium was published in February of 2018 online. Anyone interested can order a copy <lulu.com>. Search for *What Canst Thou Say*.

Quaker Elders

Thomas Clarkson (1806)

When we consider that every religious society attaches a more than common respectability to the person who performs the sacerdotal office, there will be no difficulty in supposing, whenever a minister may be thought to err, that many of those who are aware of his error, will want the courage to point it out to him, and that others will excuse themselves from doing it, by saying that interference on this occasion does not belong more immediately to them than to others.

This institution therefore of elders fixes the offices on individuals. It makes it their duty to watch and advise—It makes them responsible for the unsound doctrine, or the bad conduct of their ministers. And this responsibility is considered as likely to give persons that courage in watching over the ministry, which they might otherwise want. Hence, if a minister in the Quaker church were to preach unsoundly, or to act inconsistently with his calling, he would be generally sure of being privately spoken to by one or another elder.

This office of elders, as far as it is concerned in advising ministers of the Gospel, had its foundation laid by George Fox. Many persons, who engaged in the ministry in his time, are described by him as “having run into imaginations,” or as “having gone beyond their measure;” and in these cases, whenever they should happen, he recommended that one or two friends, if they saw fit, should advise with them in love and wisdom. In process of time, however, this evil seems to have increased; for as the society spread, numbers pressed forward to become Gospel ministers; many supposed they had a call from the spirit,

and rose up, and preached, and in the heat of their imaginations, delivered themselves unprofitably. Two or three persons also, in the frenzy of their enthusiasm, frequently rose up, and spoke at the same time.

Now this was easily to be done in a religious society, where all were allowed to speak, and where the qualifications of ministers were to be judged of in part by the truths delivered, or rather, where ordination was no mark of the ministry, or where an human appointment of it was unknown. For these reasons, that

Elders—Their appointment—One part of their office to watch over the doctrines and conduct of ministers—Another part of their office to meet the ministers of the church, and to confer and exhort for religious good—None to meddle at these conferences with the government of the church.

mode of superintendence which had only been suggested by George Fox, and left to the discretion of individuals, was perfected into an establishment, out of imperious necessity, in after times.

Men were appointed to determine between the effects of divine inspiration and human imagination; to judge between the cool and the sound; and the enthusiastic and the defective; and to put a bridle as it were upon those who were not likely to become profitable laborers in the harvest of the Gospel. And as this office was rendered necessary on account of the principle that no ordination or human appointment

could make a minister of the Gospel; so the same principle continuing among the Quakers, the office has been continued to the present day.

It devolves upon the elders again, as a second branch of their duty, to meet the ministers of the church at stated seasons, generally once in three months, and to spend some time with them in religious retirement. It is supposed that opportunities may be afforded here, of encouraging and strengthening young ministers, of confirming the old, and of giving religious advice and assistance in various ways. It must be supposed at any rate, that religious men cannot meet in religious conference, without some edification to each other. At these meetings, queries are proposed relative to the conduct both of ministers and elders, which they answer in writing to the quarterly meetings of ministers and elders to which they belong. Of the ministers and elders thus assembled, it may be observed, that it is their duty to confine themselves wholly to the exhortation of one another for good. They can make no laws, like the ancient synods and other convocations of the clergy, nor dictate any article of faith. Neither can they meddle with the government of the church. The Quakers allow neither ministers nor elders, by virtue of their office, to interfere with their discipline. Every proposition of this sort must be determined upon by the yearly meeting, or by the body at large.

Thoman Clarkson (1806) <worldspirituality.org/quaker-elders.html>. He wrote a three-volume Portraiture of Quakerism over a period of years. Fran Taber once wrote, “My copy of Clarkson’s Quakerism was once a text at Westtown School” <fwcamericas.org/pub/Taber2010.pdf>.

Showing Kindness

Anne Sherer

*Showing kindness
every single day
each action you take
it's all about mindfulness.*

*Think about the words you say
showing kindness everyday
someone old or young, in a wheelchair,
needs a warm smile, not a stare.*

*Small, tall or color of skin
all that truly matters is what's within
we all have minds and a heart
showing kindness is being smart.*

*Straight, Bi, Transgender, Lesbian or Gay
people tend to judge; so show kindness
think of people as a rainbow
you will see equality and know.*

*Everyone has emotions, feelings deep inside
happy, sad or feeling mad and sometimes want to shout
when you see someone sad, ask "Would you like a hug?"
showing kindness helps others let their feelings out.*

*How many ways can you show kindness?
Did you help your mom or dad, a friend in need
or a neighbor? Did you brush your cat, walk the dog,
fill their bowls with food to feed.*

*There are so many ways to be kind
it brings love and joy
showing kindness
is all about mindfulness.*

Anne M. Scherer is a writer, poet, and artist living in Rochester MN. This poem has appeared on the WCTS blog <worshipsharinginprint.wordpress.com>. December 20, 2018 (revision)

She Is Very Beautiful!

Poet Unknown

*A lovely elder, half-hidden in the dense forest
visible (for those with eyes to see)
when the up-front trees have been rendered sparse,
leaves having fallen,
awaiting dormancy.*

*And so may there be *elders* in all Meetings,
nature-rooted Beauties
emanating serenity
wisdom
inner health
so young whipper-snappers up front can pause from time
to time
knowing the Teacher is near,
sensing that somebody "has their back"
trusting that winter will be OK.*

*A whole picture
that is ever-mindful of God's faithfulness
front, middle and back.*

Yes!

This poem was in WCTS Editor Judy Lumb's folder for this issue with a date of June 2016, but we do not know who is the creator of this wonderful poem. If you recognize it, please email WCTS Editors <wctseditors@gmail.com> and we will announce the solution to this mystery in the next issue.

"A little child, who had seen the wonderful cathedral windows of England with their saints in glorious color, described a saint as 'a person who lets the light come through'. That is just what happens. The saint lets the light come through. But my 'saints' not only let the light through for me. . . but they were also always pulling me upward and forward by invisible cords, somewhat as the moon lifts the ocean."

—Rufus Jones (1863-1948),

Finding the Trail of Life

<inwardlight.org/excerpts_on_reclaiming_elderling.html >

How I Have Been Elderled

Rhonda Ashurst

I am new to Quaker faith and practice, though I've been reading and writing for *What Canst Thou Say* for over a decade. Looking back, I see I've been elderled all along. My first interaction with a Quaker was with Mariellen Gilpin, one of the long-time editors of WCTS. I had just lost a dear friend who wrote often for WCTS, Linda Theresa. She finished an essay on "grace" before she died, and I wanted to ensure that Mariellen had received it. She found out I too liked to write and encouraged me to write about Linda's passing. That was back in 2006 and I've been writing for WCTS ever since. Along the way, I've been elderled and coached by the talented team of editors.

I have learned so much from my fellow authors about the mystical/contemplative aspect of Quakerism. Their experiences have fed and enriched my own journey. Suddenly, I did not feel so strange and alone! Other people have these experiences too.

One of the things I love about Quakers is the way they ground their spirituality into daily life. It is simple, pure, practical. As a daughter of farmer/ranchers, I appreciate this sensibility. Through the writings of Quakers, I've learned how to ground my own mystical experiences into practical service.

In 2018, Mariellen asked me to join the editorial team of WCTS. I remember wondering if I was ready for this honor. I hesitated because I had never been to a Quaker Meeting. So, I decided to go. Imagine my shock when I discovered the Reno Friends met only a few miles from my home! I will never forget stepping into that

cozy, brick house for the first time. I felt enveloped by peaceful, nurturing energy. As we sat in silence together, I dropped deeper into mediation than I had in a long time. I was home.

I have been attending regularly for a year now. It was not long before Spirit asked me to stand and offer a message during Silent Worship. I remember the inner quaking, the quickening of my heart and breath. Was it really time to stand and say the message bursting out of me? I argued internally, "Who am I as a newcomer to stand up and speak? What if I don't do this right?" However, the power of the Spirit would not allow me to stay seated. I rose and spoke, softly.

This is an old pattern of mine, my little mouse voice. I use it when I'm unsure of myself, which is often. The problem with my little mouse voice is no one can hear it, especially the Friends who have hearing problems! Afterwards, George came up to me and said gently, "Miss Rhonda, I very much want to hear what you are saying, but you've got to speak up." He undertook a special eldering of me at that moment. Each time I rose to speak, he would cup his hand around his ear to encourage me to speak up. Sadly, George is no longer at our Meeting, but I've noticed others are taking up the cause in his absence! Slowly, I'm learning to speak clearly from the center of my belly and project out with new confidence. I notice it creeping into my life outside Meeting.

One day last summer, Peg suggested I clerk a meeting while she was out of town. I agreed, again wondering if I was ready for this step. To my surprise, it was an enjoyable

and easy experience for me. Since then, I've clerked several times and my confidence has grown.

In 2019, when the Nominating Committee asked for volunteers, I offered to clerk Meetings as needed and to help with Ministry and Oversight. To my surprise, I was nominated as Coordinator of Worship Clerks and the Clerk of Third and Fourth Sunday Meetings. I also fill in for other clerks when they can't be there. So now I have many opportunities to work on my little mouse voice!

Recently, Wendy who is our Newsletter & Website Editor, asked if I would assist with the blog on the Reno Friends website. She is a great writer, and like Mariellen and the other WCTS editors, encourages me to write and share my gifts with the Quaker community.

As I look back at my evolving Quaker path, I realize I've been led forward with encouragement by elders who see something in me I can't always see in myself. I am grateful to Linda, Mariellen, the WCTS writers and editorial team, George, Peg, Wendy and the Reno Friends for seeing my gifts and inviting me to step into them.

In the serenity of gathered silence, I am learning to wait for clarity from the Light within and beyond. I am finding my Truth and the clear, confident voice to speak what comes through, so others can hear.

With gratitude to my Elders.

Rhonda Ashurst lives a quiet, contemplative life with her partner in Reno, Nevada. She writes a blog: <rhondaashurst.com>, practices yoga and serves the cat. She attends the Reno Friends Meeting.

Spirit-Led Eldering

Katie Green

Is it possible for Friends to love each other so deeply that we are willing to take risks to help each other develop our spirituality? This was a question asked by Margery Larrabee, author of *There is a Hunger: Mutual Spiritual Friendship*. Margery is an elder and minister in FGC's Traveling Ministries Program.

I was fortunate to attend Margery Larrabee's workshop, "Spirit-Led Eldering," from March 7-9 at Pendle Hill in Philadelphia. Thank you to the Worcester Friends for making this possible. There were eleven participants in the workshop, coming from as far away as Albuquerque, New Mexico and Santa Cruz, California.

The term "Eldering" tends to evoke negative connotations. When we hear the term, many of us imagine a scolding voice reminding us to "listen to our elders" when we have misbehaved as a child. It was interesting to note that the word "eldering" is not to be found in the index of NEYM's Faith and Practice, or in many other Yearly Meetings' Faith and Practices. In years past, some Quaker Meetings had "named" Elders, but this practice stopped in 1962 in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Now our Meetings do not designate "Elders" as specific persons; the word "eldering" now describes a process—hence we strive for Spirit-led eldering.

At the workshop, we recognized that eldering takes place in order to correct or avoid specific problems that can misdirect the Meeting away from a divine spirit of unity with each other and God. One must hold the Quaker basic belief that a Divine

Unity is possible to attain. Why would it not be, if we as Friends believe that there is that of God in everyone?

Eldering is grounded in prayer, both individual and with others. The process of eldering involves Spiritual development and study. Margery stressed that eldering needs to be done by a "seasoned and experienced Friend". It is not undertaken lightly, but centered in prayer. Of course, lightness and laughter have a place in the process, too

Margery was a wonderful workshop leader, presenting information in a clear manner, and modeling the eldering process all the while. She was centered and present; clear and direct; non-judgmental. She paid close attention to our words, and asked questions that helped to clarify our intention and deepen our awareness. She reminded us that everyone wants to be known for who they really are, and everyone wants to be loved for their true, deep selves.

Studying and practicing Spirit-Led Eldering can strengthen our Monthly Meeting. Practiced as Margery outlines it, Spirit-Led Eldering can enhance everyone's lives. I strongly encourage each Friend and attender to read the *Pendle Hill Pamphlet*, "Spirit-Led Eldering" by Margery Larrabee. Spirit-Led Eldering in the Meeting helps us to meet each other in a manner that shows that we truly can see that God in each other.

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Overheard at Yearly Meeting

"I've noticed that 'well, Quakers are mostly introverts' is used as a reasoning why we fail to chat with newcomers and hope someone else talks to them. If that's the case, then why do we stick to the introvert-hell of 'stand and introduce yourself to a room full of dozens of strangers'? Wouldn't a bunch of introverts know better?"

"Our Meeting is doing better at welcoming newcomers lately. I think some of our introverts are able to imagine how the newcomers feel if nobody speaks with them."

For Elders—and Others: The Costingness of Ministry

Gerald K. Hibbert (1935)

An open discussion on subjects related to Eldership is proposed for Yearly Meeting Elders at the next Yearly Meeting. To promote this the five questions that follow have been prepared and circulated, and form the basis of this article.

1.--Elders are charged with the duty of ensuring “the right holding” of meetings for worship, and are encouraged “to cherish an interest in the spiritual welfare of all their fellow members.” How can this counsel be put into practice?

2.--There is great need for a living ministry. Do we, as Elders, concentrate upon the development of that spirit out of which such ministry will arise?

3.--Do we represent the vocal ministry as a call to a splendid and joyous vocation? Do we realise the essential “costingness” of ministry?

4.--Is the ministry shallow, casual, lacking grip and conviction? Has it become too humanitarian, or bordering too much upon politics? Is it sufficiently related to our experience of God--to his self-disclosure in Christ--to what He has done and is doing in the lives of men and women?

5.--There is an important place for vocal prayer in our meetings for worship. Do Elders sufficiently realise this and give wise encouragement to any who may have a gift in this way?

Elders have been considering the Questions prepared by the Executive Committee of Yearly Meeting Elders, and asked to give them careful consideration. It is hoped to have an open discussion at next Y.M. on subjects related to Eldership.

The questions are naturally and rightly concerned with our Meetings for Worship and the Ministry in those meetings: this is the main of Elders. They emphasise the need for a living ministry, deep, searching, springing from our experience of God in his self-disclosure in Christ. They raise the important point of the value of vocal prayer in our meetings, and urge Elders to realise this and to give wise encouragement to any who may have a gift in this way.

These questions emphasise the need for a living ministry, deep, searching, springing from our experience of God in his self-disclosure in Christ. They raise the important point of the value of vocal prayer in our meetings, and urge Elders to realise this and to give wise encouragement to any who may have a gift in this way.

We may perhaps single out Question 3 for consideration in this article, because of its balance and comprehensiveness, and because it is a real challenge: “Do we represent the vocal as a call to a splendid and joyous? Do we realise the essential ‘costing’ of ministry?” And while the “we” in question is primarily addressed to Elders, all of our Society can take it as applying to themselves, whether technically Elders or not. Not one of us can really evade this issue.

Let us take the second part, of the question first--the “costingness”

of ministry. Time was when there was no need to emphasise this aspect of ministry in our Society. Readers of Neave Brayshaw’s book, *The Quakers: Their Story and Message*, will remember the instances he gives in that remarkable chapter, “The History of Quaker Ministry,” to show the positive fear of being led to take vocal part in the ministry that was characteristic of in many Friends in the early part of last century. He reminds us that an atmosphere of unnaturalness and even of weirdness had come to cling round the idea of ministry. “Those on whom the awful gift had descended came to be regarded as a separate of men and women, forever marked off others.”

Some of the extracts given from the journals of ministering Friends of that time sound strange today. Thus, Lydia Ann Barclay writes: “I feel now ill with conflict, and the dread of meeting days,” thus vividly depicting her distress at the prospect of ministry. William Allen, on being recorded as a minister in 1820, writes: “I am now placed in an awful situation. May the Great Preserver of men be near to support and sustain under every trial, and prevent me from doing anything which may injure His great and good cause. I am indeed very low and in much fear.”

Another Friend, Mary Burt, who, after twenty five years’ struggle, at last yielded to the call by quoting a single text, wrote a few weeks afterwards in her diary: “My heart is saddened by the recollection that tomorrow will be meeting-day again.”

Others, like Thomas Pumphrey, Elizabeth Fry and John Yardley, felt that the call to the ministry might

be a temptation of the devil, the first named telling us that he “struggled against the call, fearing it was a suggestion of Satan to bring dishonour on the precious truth,” and the last named writing: “I have often secretly said, ‘Get thee behind me, I will not be tempted with such a thing’...Such was my dislike to the work that I suffered myself to be lulled into a state of unbelief as to the rectitude of the concern.”

Now the idea underlying this fear was undoubtedly good, and we can understand and sympathise with it. “In all this,” says Neave Brayshaw, “we see the concern of the true minister that his life shall commend his words.” Or, in the phraseology of our question, these Friends realised the essential costliness of ministry. They distrusted the easy flow of speech, the shallow casual utterance that so lightly runs off the tongue, and they feared above all things “to outrun the Guide” or “to exceed the measure.”

We can respect their position without wishing fully to adopt it. Of the two extremes, reserve and verbosity, this is the less harmful.

The Friends of a century ago had not coined the expressive phrase descriptive of voluble speakers as being “too light on the trigger,” but they evidently knew the dangers attaching to volubility. As far back as 1717, Thomas Story had described the Yearly Meeting as “a crowding time, there not being, for the most part, one minute’s time between the end of one testimony and the beginning of another, an indecency I have ever disliked.”

Now, to balance this, and to prevent the sense of the costliness involved in all true ministry from paralysing us and reducing us to the bondage of fear, let us turn to the first half of our question. “Do we represent the vocal ministry as a call to a splendid

and joyous vocation?” “Splendid” and “joyous” are glorious adjectives, not perhaps reflecting the Quaker caution of a hundred years ago, but just the right words in this setting. What indeed is more splendid and joyous than the gospel of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ, and what vocation can be more splendid and joyous than that of sharing with others our experience thereof in our own hearts? We do not hesitate to appeal to the young to dedicate themselves to high and heroic tasks: what work can be higher or more heroic than to live and to preach Christ to a world that is “rattling into barbarism” for want of him?

These Friends realised the essential costliness of ministry. They distrusted the easy flow of speech, the shallow casual utterance that so lightly runs off the tongue, and they feared above all things “to outrun the Guide” or “to exceed the measure.” ...

What indeed is more splendid and joyous than the gospel of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ, and what vocation can be more splendid and joyous than that of sharing with others our experience thereof in our own hearts?

It is this positive and triumphant note that we need to sound today, if indeed our own experience warrants our sounding it, and if our faith in God is strong enough. Are we inspired enough to lay on all our members, ourselves included, the great claims of the Christian ministry, by example far more than by precept, but not excluding the latter? This of course does not mean asking our members to specialise in theology or go to college or give up business: it is simply

emphasising our fundamental position of the “Priesthood of all believers,” and urging upon all of us our individual and collective responsibility for the life of our Meetings. “In the Light,” said Fox, “everyone should have something to offer.”

Whether in silence or in speech, we lay our gift on the altar, and the fire kindles. We worship as individuals, but not selfishly, for we worship also as a group: we “feel the power of God in one another” as we “meet together and know one another in that which is eternal which was before the world was.”

In such an atmosphere ministry cannot be shallow or casual or lacking conviction and grip. Even if it becomes “humanitarian or bordering on politics” (see Question 4), it will still be “in the life,” based upon the Unseen, and uniting rather than dividing: a humanitarianism or a politic with its roots in God cannot lead us astray. In praying and working for such an atmosphere in our Meetings, Elders will be “concentrating on the development of that spirit out of which a living ministry will arise” (see Question 2). The ministry largely reflects the spiritual life of the group, and for this spiritual life we all--Elders and non-Elders equally and alike--are responsible, “that all may be as one family, building up one another and helping one another.”

Gerald K. Hibbert: *this article was published in **The Friend** (London) Vol. 92, No. 15 (12th of 4th Month), 1935.*



Sharing a Lifetime with an Elder

Ken Jacobsen

We spent our lives together living out the answers, and discovering new queries. What is it like to share a lifetime with an elder like Katharine, and what is it like after she (in the world's parlance) dies? How do beloved elders live on with us, in us, in our lives? Below are prayers that have come along the way. Somehow her endearing work is not over, nor is mine. The second prayer came as I had a vision of Katharine sending me forth to carry on our ministry.

Midwifing Souls

*our life together, beloved,
was midwifing souls,
seeing, hearing, loving, supporting souls into being,
into their own joy as children of Love;
you midwifed me into being, birth after birth,
and I (you tell me) midwifed you,
and so we could help to midwife others
who came to us;*

*all of this continues, beloved, since your passing,
I want only to carry on the life we learned together,
this life of midwifing souls who come to us,
helping midwife them, again and again,
into their own unfolding joy as children of the living Love.*

kpj 12/23/17

Ken Jacobsen and his wife Katharine lived and taught in Quaker schools and communities for many years, and kept a poustinia, a retreat house for travelers at their lakeside home in Wisconsin. Ken is a member of Stillwater Meeting, Ohio Yearly Meeting.

My Midwifing Friend

*my beautiful friend,
a lifetime you walked beside me, hand in hand,
loving, guiding, nurturing me
until you had to lay your body down;
now I feel you behind me, your hands outstretched,
encouraging me to move into what new life
Holy Love may have for me,
a life that grows out of our life of Love;*

*my beautiful friend,
as we entered into and lived out
the shared life that Holy Love had for us,
I feel you now, in your love,
midwifing me into whatever new life
Holy Love may have for me,
to carry on what we began.*

*thank you forever my beautiful friend,
my midwifing friend.*

kpj 1/5/18

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August 2019

Discernment

Guest Editor: **Marcia Nelson**

Growth in the spiritual life comes precisely in faithful exercise of whatever capacity for discernment we are given. ... As far as we are able, we practice an ongoing intentional openness and prayerful attentiveness to intimations of divine presence and guidance, both inwardly and in outward life and relationships. —Patricia Loring
How have you experienced discernment? What tests of discernment have you used? How have you distinguished discernment from ordinary thinking? In what way(s) has discernment made a difference for you?

Deadline: May 15, 2019

November 2019

Young Adult Friends' Spirituality

Guest Editor: **Greg Woods**

What role has your faith/spirituality played as you traverse young adulthood? What has most surprised you about your journey? What are you seeking in a spiritual community? What have been the challenges in your search? Have you found what you seek? What gifts do you bring to a spiritual community? Who or what has inspired you spiritually as a young adult? How has that inspiration affected your spiritual journey?

Deadline: August 15, 2019

February 2020

Healing

Guest Editor: **Susan Greenler**

To Heal means "to make sound or whole". Healing comes in all forms: emotional, physical, spiritual, and most often these are intertwined. Each day we live brings opportunities for healing, growth, wholeness: this is life. We invite stories and poems about an experience or transformation that is foundational to who you have become. How have you healed? What led to an experience of increased wholeness? What have you learned along the way? How has God/Christ been present in your healing journey? What does the concept of "healing" mean to you?

Deadline: November 15, 2019

What Canst Thou Say?

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