

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

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VISIONS AND VOICES

GO TO CAMP DAVID

by Stephen L. Angell

In June of 1970, I had a truly life-changing experience. I was clerk of the General Committee of Friends Committee on National Legislation. President Nixon was in office. It was the time of great national unrest over the Vietnam War. On this particular weekend, I was traveling to Washington to attend a meeting of the FCNL Executive Committee. It also happened to be the weekend of the largest anti-Vietnam War demonstration that took place just following the killing of four Kent State University students. I had made appointments in Washington in connection with my consulting business; it required precise planning of my travel time.

Before I left for Washington, my wife gave me the message that a Quaker friend urgently wanted to talk to me before I left. I took his phone number and said I would call him enroute. I did this while at a service station; the message was that some Quakers and others would be gathering in Lafayette Park, opposite the White House, to hold Richard Nixon in the Light. My friend hoped I would be able to attend. I said I could not promise because of other commitments, but I would be there if I could.

I continued my journey to Washington. For a reason I did not know, the route I found myself taking was not the route I would ordinarily have taken. While I was traveling, I listened to my car radio. Much of the news was about the national unrest, the aftermath of the Kent State killings, the upcoming demonstration in Washington,

and a report that the President was at Camp David. I was very much focused on my travel progress and getting to Washington for my 1:00 p.m. appointment, and all seemed to be going well.

It was at this time that I got a message. The message was that I should go to Camp David and give a message to the President. This took me completely by surprise, since I'd had no previous thought of doing anything like this. First of all, I had no notion of how to get to Camp David, and secondly I did not know what message I should give to the President. This had to be a whole lot of nonsense, I thought, and I was right on time to meet my personal commitments. I kept trying to put this out of my mind, but it would not let me go.

I kept on driving and found myself in the Catocin Mountains. I came to a side road that veered to the right off the main highway and received the instruction that I should turn there. I had no notion where it led. Besides, I was right on schedule and did not know if Camp David was ten, twenty-five, or fifty miles away. It made no sense to turn there, and I refused to do it. I drove on down the highway for about two miles, and I literally could not drive any further. I had to pull the car over to the side of the road. This requires another story:

A few months earlier, I'd heard over the radio that on a given date Norman Vincent Peale, a spiritual advisor to Richard Nixon, was going to have open office hours at his church in New York City, and anyone who wanted to come in and talk to him could do so. I got a message then that I should go in to see Dr. Peale and talk to him about his support of President Nixon and the conduct of the war in Vietnam. I'd tried to put this out my mind as something I did not want to do. However, on the day these office hours were to occur, I was on the subway in New York City and I had no conflicting appointments and could easily have gone in to see Dr. Peale. But I refused to do so. This left me extremely uncomfortable, so uncomfortable that I finally said, "Please let me go this time, I *promise* if you ever again ask me to do something like this, I will do it."

This *was* the next time!

I turned my car around and went back to the road where I had been instructed to turn. A short way down the road was a sign advertising an orchard and I thought, "Good. I will end up in someone's orchard and I can turn around, forget this nonsense and go on my way." The road, however, went right through the orchard and came to a T

From the Editor

In this issue on **Visions and Voices**, contributors speak of occasions in their lives when the "cloud of unknowing" was pierced, if only for a moment. Several people tell of times when an inner voice or image came to them. Others write of times when their hearing or seeing opened into moments of expanded consciousness. How do such experiences affect our lives, our way of being on the earth? Do they increase our capacity for love? "And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge... yet do not have charity, I am nothing" (Corinthians 1:13). Sharing numinous experiences requires careful discernment. We are grateful that these contributors trust the readers of *What Canst Thou Say?* with stories that explore how such visions and voices affect one's identity, perceptions, work, and spiritual journey.

Kathy Tapp, Editor for this issue

intersection. I said, "O.K. you're in charge; which way do I turn?" The instruction was to turn to the left.

I then began to think, well if I am supposed to go to Camp David, maybe I should stop and ask how to get there. But then I thought - no, if I am supposed to get there, I will get there. I continued to travel down the road and came to Catoctin National Park. The instruction was to turn into the park. There was a park office there where I thought I could ask my way, but my answer to myself was again, no, if I am supposed to get there I will get there. I traveled into the park, rounded a curve and saw a sign: Camp David. This was such an overpowering experience that I had to pull over to the side of the road and regain my composure.

Well, now I was at Camp David. I had to do it. I thought, they will think I am crazy if I tell them I have a message for the President but I don't know what it is. I pulled up to the gatehouse. There were two officers inside. One officer asked me what my business was, and I said I had come with a message for the President. He said he would see that the President received it. I said that I could not give him the message, but I could only tell him how I got there and started to tell my story. While I was talking to the one officer, the other one was on the telephone. He finally came over and spoke to the officer listening to me. He then told me if I would pull my car off to the side, one of the president's staff would come out and speak with me. I did this; shortly a man came from inside the compound and sat down in the passenger seat of my car.

I explained how I got to Camp David and then reached the point of relating a message--which until that moment I had no notion of. I had faith that when the time came the words would be there. My feelings and opinions about Richard Nixon were very negative. I have no clear recollection of what my exact words were. What is very clear to me is that all of a sudden I had a great sense of compassion for the man. My words conveyed this by acknowledging the great weight and concern he must be under for the state of the country and the difficult decisions he must make.

I went on to say that on Sunday at 11:00 AM Quakers and others would be holding a Meeting for Worship in Lafayette Park to pray for him, that he might be well guided in the decisions that he had to make. I said that we would welcome him among us; however, we would understand if he could not be there, but hoped that he might worship with us from inside the White House.

The presidential staff person wanted information about me. It just happened that the most recent issue of the FCNL Newsletter was profiling some of the leadership. In this issue was my picture and an accompanying article. I reached into my attache case on the back seat; there on top of a pile of papers was this recent publication. I handed this to him and he left. I was then able to resume my trip

to Washington.

(It was reported later that late Saturday night the President had gone from the White House to the Lincoln Memorial to talk with anti-war demonstrators.) The President did not attend the meeting in Lafayette Park. I did, however, write him a letter expressing our regret that he could not be with us. The compassionate feelings that came over me while at Camp David were still with me. A week or so later I received a three or four sentence letter of appreciation signed by Richard Nixon. It appeared to me to be authentic.

The impact of this experience has shaped the remainder of my life, because I know experientially that there is a power well beyond my comprehension that can give direction to my life.

Stephen Angell is a member of Kendall Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. He has been actively involved with the Alternatives to Violence project since it started in 1975. He feels this work is spiritually inspired. He has done extensive work in the prisons and in conflict areas around the world.

A JOYFUL NOISE **by Alison Lohans**

Middle age has provided me with many opportunities to explore new avenues of learning. One of these has been a committed return to instrumental music, something which brought me great joy all through school and university, and then again in my late twenties when I taught beginning band. Yet the choices we make according to the demands of daily living sometimes require us to set aside things we truly love, and this was the case for me.

However, at the age of 47 I timidly (but also tenaciously) began studying yet another instrument, the cello. My cello lessons and daily practicing quickly became a highlight of my life - a consuming and passionate focus.

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I have long believed that music has a mystical side, in its ability to give voice to realms of spirit and human consciousness which cannot be uttered or accessed through language, in its "feelingful" aesthetic power to transcend and provide sublime experiencing and unity. Even so, this life-long instinctive belief didn't fully prepare me for an incident a few months ago, which left me shaken for several days afterwards.

The occasion itself was mundane. Needing to write a story script on Brahms for a local children's concert series, I popped a cassette tape of a Brahms string sextet into a tape player that I seldom use because of its terrible sound quality. I then sat at the dining room table to play solitaire while listening, hoping I could think of story ideas in the process. Shuffling cards, dealing them out, flipping them over, musing on details of Brahms' life which might work in my script – it seemed I slipped into a sort of loop with the music playing (scratchily), volume turned high. The playing cards kept moving, automatically, but after awhile my thoughts stilled.

As sometimes happens during concerts, a lump swelled in my throat and my eyes grew hot with tears which soon began spilling. Even so, I was astonished because normally it's a terrible chore to listen to anything on that cassette player. Yet the music drew me, reaching inside and claiming me with an intensity that has never happened in a concert hall.

Somehow I was the music, and the music was me. I could feel how the cellists' fingers were positioned on the strings – the exact muscle tension/relaxation; the point of contact; the fluidity of movement; their "dance". I could feel the bows moving – the angle of connection; the bite of hair tugging at strings; how much, and which parts, of the bows were being used; another, more stately "dance". But there was so very much more. The colours and shades of the music swept through me, moving me, molding me; I was fully in its power. Filled with intense joy, yet also intense sorrow, I sat there weeping over my still-moving solitaire cards. Such a joyous sense of recognition: "This is me; this is what I am supposed to be doing with my life; this is what I need; this is the only place I want to be," countered by "I'm fifty years old and in my fourth year of cello study; it's hopeless to even consider ever being able to play like that." It went on and on and on, astonishingly intense and wonderful, but also a bit frightening – because I couldn't seem to get "out".

Feeling as though I couldn't handle it any longer on my own and still in tears, I tried calling two music teachers I knew, but neither was home. So I simply paced about the house, hoping to distance myself, and finally sat down in another room to clip my toenails, to try to get a grip. Eventually the tape ended, but it didn't occur to me until later that I could have turned it off.

For hours afterwards the intensity lingered; I wasn't able to think or talk of anything else, and had trouble sleeping

that night. I felt shaken for several days, and it took awhile longer before I dared once again open myself to truly listen to the music I love so much.

Alison Lohans is a lifelong Friend and a member of Prairie Monthly Meeting (Canadian Yearly Meeting). She is a writer of children's books and, since childhood, has found an intense spiritual joy through music.

VOICES AND VISIONS

by James Baker

There is a holy Other which I have come to call the Presence, closer than the marrow of my bones, which can speak with a voice, vision, dream, illuminating the solitude at the center of my being. This Innerness and I have an ongoing conversation -- a voice yet not a voice, yet a voice -- speaking from the Silence, like a Light that I discover new each day, becoming very quiet if I stray off my path. In my life this communication must come first, must be primal, must take precedence or I lose my way.

...Such things are private and sacred. To speak of these things seems to me to be as inappropriate as if one were to take the clothes off one's beloved in public and say, "See how beautiful she is." It is not given to be talked about -- only in very rare circumstances. One does not throw pearls indiscriminately.

James Baker is a (convinced) member of Downer's Grover (IL) Friends Meeting. He finds God to be full of surprises.

GIVE THANKS

by Bill Brown

Definitely I was off to a very unpromising start. Arriving at the FGC Gathering after a wearying drive, I found to my dismay that my briefcase containing carefully prepared items for the coming week was nowhere to be found. Then, I found that our dormitory room was directly off the area where the teen Friends gathered. In addition, I was wrongly advised that the men's bathroom was on the floor above, requiring an elevator access. I grumbled about the women's bathroom just opposite our bedroom, not noticing that it had been designated unisex. The long lines at the dining area were no more reassuring.

The first plenary session was rewarding, and I began to let go of my disgruntlement. Leaving the auditorium I noted the architecturally interesting chapel. Though sorely needing sleep, I was curious to see it. As I walked into the simple chapel, I heard with my inward ear a voice saying *give thanks*.

I prayed for pardon for my many complaints and gave thanks for yet another year with the privilege of attending an FGC Gathering. Weariness fell away, and I felt filled with the Holy Spirit and joyous expectation of the week ahead.

I found the bookstore where it seemed that everyone at the Gathering with whom I felt a special bond of love was

browsing. The reunions were precious, and the Light within intensified until I felt that I was floating midair. Surely anyone who met me on the return to the dormitory knew that I was filled to capacity with the Holy Spirit.

Bill Brown is a member of Milwaukee (WI) Meeting. For seven years he was coordinating clerk of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Part of his ministry involves arranging displays of wildflowers for Sunday worship at IYM.

I WAS ONCE A MONK

by Bruce Nagle

Two years ago my wife Carla and I spent time in Scotland. Off the southwest coast of Mull is the tiny island of Iona. We reached it by a short ferry ride.

As soon as I was ashore I found myself drawn irresistibly toward the interior, along a well-worn path. Something was pulling me, beckoning me, and I moved quickly ahead of the group we were with, leaving Carla to accompany her frail and elderly father. Moving up a gentle slope away from the sea, I came upon a ruined nunnery. It was a magical place – gentle, haunting, still.

As I stood alone in sunlight and then in shadow I could feel the ghosts, welcoming but not trying to possess. I heard subtle rustles here, saw the flickers of invisible footsteps across the grass there. The place was alive with the spirits of the ancients. I scarcely dared to breathe. I slowly walked through kitchen and chapel, storehouse and cloister. The hush was vibrant, time suspended. I was not alone.

Looking out through the remains of a window, I saw in the distance, perhaps half a mile away, an old abbey, and I felt invisible hands gently ushering me onward toward it. I walked enchanted across the barren meadow and past the tall and imposing stone Celtic cross standing on a small rise.

Upon arrival I saw that the abbey was occupied. No longer housing a continuing residential community, it had become a retreat center. A few local folks and tourists drifted through the cloister, quietly, curiously. At one end was the chapel. I entered it from the back, facing the front of the church. Modest in size, it was rugged and unpretentious, clearly used regularly, with slightly musty hymnals and prayer books on the benches. The feeling I had was of being "almost there but not quite." Content but slightly puzzled, I stood for a while just breathing in the present and waiting.

I gradually became aware of a presence, a pulling, from behind my left shoulder. I turned and, against the back

stone wall, noticed a flight of stone steps ascending from the middle of the wall upward and to the right, ending at a tiny wooden door half way up the back left corner of the room. I was irresistibly summoned to climb the stairway, not understanding exactly why, only knowing that I must.

The door was small, only about four feet in height, and was closed, a small wooden latch on its right side. I opened it and saw revealed a tiny room, a stone cell about five feet square and high. I had to crouch to enter and could not stand upright within. A diminutive wooden three-legged stool stood in the center. The room was otherwise bare except for a small iron cross on one wall, illuminated by the light from a narrow vertical window about six inches wide and three feet high.

I closed the door behind me and sat down on the stool. The quietness was palpable, and it seemed that everything stopped, that time and events held their breath. Then without warning a window opened in time itself, hundreds of years vanished, and I was sitting there in coarse woolen habit, tonsured, still. And I intuitively knew that I was home, that I had been here before, time out of

time, in a lifetime long ago. I can't explain in language what the experience was like, but I knew that I was, had been, am, that monk.

I spent only a few minutes there, but those few minutes seemed an eternity, and they are as indelibly present to me now as if I were there at this moment. The experience is incommunicable and absolutely real. My heart is pounding in my throat as I tell the story to you.

Bruce Nagle is a member of Beloit (WI) Monthly Meeting. His spiritual practice changes subtly over time, but for the past couple of years has included meditation and tai chi in the morning, yoga in the evening. He becomes progressively more interested in the spaces and silences around words than in the words themselves.

COME HOME

by Kim Lacy

A little over a year ago, I attended Pacific Yearly Meeting, as I have most every summer of my life. I helped run the children's program, so it was a particularly busy week for me. I was grateful to schedule an appointment for a Swedish-style massage, which was offered by the conference center hosting our yearly meeting.

When I met the massage practitioner, we talked about the CD of chanting he had playing, and he offered Native American flute music as an option. As much as I enjoy flute music, and the chanting was not something I would

PRAYERS FOR CAROL ROTH

Please hold Carol Roth, a most beloved member of the WCTS editorial team, in your prayers. You all know her name because until lately WCTS's address has been c/o Carol Roth in New Jersey. You may also remember her wonderful writing about her awareness of God's presence. Carol has been very ill during the last few years and now has been diagnosed with a rare, chronic, debilitating condition of the digestive tract. She asks that we hold her in the Light not only that her health might stabilize, but also that she might continue in her sense of loving Divine Presence as she faces what life brings her.

We love you, Carol.

normally listen to, I chose to keep the chant playing – it seemed like it had been selected with intention and I felt I was to listen to it.

Soon after the massage started, I began to have physical experiences that were new to me. As the practitioner worked on tight spots in the muscles of my back, I could feel more than just the muscles relax; I actually felt the tension being pulled out of my body. The best way I know to describe the sensation was that it was akin to pushing an air bubble out from beneath cellophane or tape and have it pop out the side. I knew something different than I'd ever experienced was happening.

The massage proceeded and I became more and more aware that my body, mind and spirit are deeply interconnected. This was no longer an intellectual understanding; I knew it in my heart and in my body, with all my knowing.

As I sank deeper into the experience, into this knowing, I became more attracted to the chanting that had been playing throughout. I had a sense that something very important was being communicated, even though it was intoned in Sanskrit. (Or another language? To this day I don't know.) I did not understand the verbal symbols that were being used. I felt that the chanting was calling those listening to gather together. I imagined this gathering occurring in an amphitheater on a mountaintop – a peak experience.

Then, very clearly, I heard the chant call to me, *Come home*. It spoke the words to me two or three times. Without hesitation, without question as to how this would be done, I simply followed the voice and I came home.

I felt myself in my body, whole and complete. My ego self fell away and I knew that I was a spiritual being on Earth to have a material experience in the body God gave me. I became aware of death and was not afraid because the Spirit is eternal. Time and place fell away. The differences between all other beings and me were of no import – we were one in the Light.

While I do not pretend to understand how, or even whether, the words *come home* were spoken to me, I do believe God was with me, as s/he always is, patiently waiting for me to obey the call. I do know that as a result of hearing those words, my spiritual journey has been deeply affected.

I sense that I have entered distinctly new territory. I understand there is no going back. I have spent a year of heightened contemplation and exploration. My attention has been focused on my spiritual work, both my personal work and how I share my spiritual awareness with my community. I have learned so much, it's bedazzling. I have been so blessed by the gift that was offered to me that day, and I am so grateful that I was able to hear it call to me.

Kim Lacy is a member of San Francisco (CA) Friends Meeting. After fifteen years as a paralegal and eight as a bookseller, she recently completed training as a doula (birth assistant) and is exploring changing her profession. She is interested in the physical experience of the spirit. Her spiritual practices include Reiki, Yoga and Qi Gong.

ADA'S POTATOES

(As told by Paul Riley to Linda Lee)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord." Isaiah 55.8

I cherish the experience of having grown up in an Indiana community settled by Quakers in the 1830's. In 1943 or 1944 when I was a boy, there was a woman named Ada who was almost 100 years old, having outlived two generations. It seemed to me that she was from another world. My family and other neighbors had cleared the land around our white houses and our pastures had no trees. But trees surrounded the brown house Ada and her husband George lived in, and their cows ate in the shade of tall oaks. Their kitchen smelled like cinnamon and she had a jar of cookies for children.

Ada's ankles were swollen by dropsy – what we now call congestive heart failure – so walking was difficult. She sat rocking on her porch for hours, meditatively tilting back and forth with her eyes closed. She was there in the heat of July, through the chill of fall and on the milder winter days. Ada's husband, George, still had his old farm equipment and tended a few crops.

One winter afternoon Ada told him, "Come spring, we are going to plant twenty acres of potatoes." Now this was more potatoes than George had ever planted, and I suppose they had some discussion about it. Ada said the potatoes were for the poor. But who were the poor? This was a farming community. We grew our living. Everyone had enough. No one was poor. Ada insisted the potatoes had to be planted. We were fat and sleek and we laughed at Ada.

In early spring I walked by the area we called the bog. It had always seemed to me like a magical place. I smelled the raw pungency of newly turned earth and, going farther, saw George on his old tractor. George had



already cleared and plowed the 20 acres of flood plain that had not been farmed before. Ada sat on the big flat hay wagon with piles of cut-up seed potatoes. She must have been cutting potatoes for weeks as she rocked by the fire and, when the weather softened, on the porch. George had positioned the wagon so Ada was lined up with a row and as he slowly drove the tractor, she dropped the potatoes into the furrows. Her huge legs dangled over the rough wooden edge of the wagon as they bumped along. It was a strange sight, and a puzzling one.

That spring was a dry one, so floods did not wash out the potatoes as some in town had predicted. There had been no rain in March, there was no rain in April or May. June was dry, too. Many seeds did not sprout. Seedlings withered. Wells went dry. Fish died in the river. August

was dry. Dust blew across the fields. Trees lost their leaves early.

Our sheep and cows were like family pets, but we had to sell them. We ate oatmeal and prayed for rain. We became thin. Cousins sent money from Iowa. In September there was a sprinkling of rain so we had some endive.

In all the brown country, the only green was along the river. One morning Ada took a hoe, leaning heavily on it as she made her slow way toward the tangle of brush. Her shouts brought George running, thinking she had fallen. Potatoes had grown large among the brambles and weeds. George went down with his antique tractor and collected the harvest. Every week he threw potatoes on the wagon and on Sunday put them in the vestibule at meeting. We were grateful.

We had been sleek and fat and prosperous and proud of our accomplishments. We had thought we were in control of our lives. We had lived in a verdant Garden of Eden, but we had forgotten God as the giver of all life. Ada saw through time to the other side, saw ahead into the ultimate. She knew, somehow, to plant the potatoes. She and George had planted the potatoes for us, the poor.

Telling this story now sixty some years later, I know what it is to be without water. It made me grateful not only then, but also in times to come. When I water my lawn I see this precious gift coming out of the hose.

Paul Riley is a psychiatrist and a theologian at a seminary. He comes from generations of conservative Quakers and has kept to that tradition. Paul is a long-time attendee at First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis (IN).

VISION

by Wendy Clarissa Geiger

The following vision happened while I was washing dishes at the kitchen sink five years ago. My parents met in the Civil Rights Movement; while I was growing up, thinking about racism was very much a part of my life. I used to ask my mother several times a year how she could have lived with such blatant racism when she was younger. "Didn't you just want to go out into the street and scream?" I'd ask. She'd answer, "People protested and people got arrested."

In my vision I saw myself with my son (though I do not yet have a son) doing the dishes. My son asked, "Mama, what was it like to live with nuclear weapons? Didn't you just want to go out into the streets and scream?" I answered him, "People protested and people got arrested." End of vision and a return to awareness of washing the dishes. When I'm despairing for the world and for its future, I remember this vision and this returns me to the task of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

Wendy Clarissa Geiger is a European American who joyfully attends Jacksonville (FL) Meeting. She enjoys collecting stamps and pithy quotes, singing folk songs, watching rain fall and preparing herself for meeting for worship.

"I was at the plow... and suddenly I heard a voice saying to me, 'Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house.' And I had a promise given with it, whereupon I did exceedingly rejoice that I had heard the voice of that God which I had professed from a child, but had never known him... And when I came home I gave up my estate, cast out my money; but not being obedient in going forth, the wrath of God was upon me, so that I was made a wonder to all and none thought I would have lived. But after I was made willing, I began to make some preparation... Shortly afterwards going a gate-ward with a friend from my own house, having an old suit, without any money, having neither taken leave of wife or children, not thinking then of any journey, I was commanded to go into the west, not knowing whither I should go, nor what I was to do there. But when I had been there a little while, I had given me what I was to declare. And ever since I have remained not knowing today what I was to do tomorrow...[The promise was] that God would be with me, which promise I find made good every day."
James Nayler (1616-1660)

Quote submitted by Jan Hoffman of Mt. Toby Meeting, Amherst (MA).

ECHOES FROM THE BURNING BUSH Traditional Gospel Song

*Moses stood on Holy Ground
Fire from God descended down;
Set the roadside bush on fire.
Then the Lord did there explain
To his servant should remain,
All the echoes from the bush on fire.*

*All the echoes from this bush
How they thrill my soul;
All the echoes from this bush
Point me to my goal.*

*I ain't no more in doubting
But with joy am shouting
With no thoughts ashamed to blush;
This my song shall ever be
Words that are so sweet to me,
Echoes from the burning bush.*



A GIFT OF TENDERING

by Mariellen Gilpin

I was the new leader of a self-help group for mental sufferers, and I lay rigid in bed, furious. A new group member who had been a sexually abused child had manipulated the whole group into rescuing her. She was pretty, the group was mostly men, and they had fallen all over themselves for the privilege of being her fall guys. I was the leader, and somehow I had to get the group growing again. I had to get beyond my own anger. I did what I often do when I am angry. I shared my anger in prayer.

Suddenly I saw the young woman, a tiny child in training pants, in a dark room, being raped by her father. I felt her choking fear as his hand covered her mouth, her inability to help herself in his strong grip, her sense of raw injustice and no recourse, her sexual response in the midst of fear and pain. Her pain became my pain, and my chest hurt. I lay still, my anger forgotten.

"Thank you, Jesus," I finally said. "You gave me that vision so I'd know deep down why she feels she has no choice but to be a victim. Her father took away her power when she was a tiny child, and she doesn't know – probably can't believe – she has a choice. She doesn't think she's worthy of having a choice..." I reflected on my anger of a few minutes before. "I still need to stop her from making the whole group into another abusive relationship. But somehow, I've got to tell her she has a choice, and tell her in a way that she can believe deep inside, where she's still two years old." And I began praying for the words to help the suffering woman believe she didn't have to be a victim.

I was angry enough to spit, and then I was tendered. The night I spoke to the woman, a tremulous look of hope glimmered in her eyes. The guys' eyes misted over, because they saw her when she first began to believe she could choose.

Tenderings don't always, or even usually, come to me as visions. However they come, always I feel the pain and suffering my friend felt when he or she first felt the need to become manipulative and hurtful. Sometimes now I ask to be tendered, and I don't always wait until I'm angry to ask.

I'm not sure, but I think asking to be tendered may be one of those prayers that always gets answered in the affirmative. And once tendered, always tendered. The next time my friend does something manipulative and hurtful, all I have to say is, "Oh help," and the tendering comes again. I feel very close to God when the tenderings come. For a moment God is sharing with me God's own perspective on my friend. Maybe it's God's own pain I feel.

Mariellen O. Gilpin is a member of Urbana-Champaign (IL) Meeting. She celebrates the many ways God has helped her deal with mental illness.

NEW ADDRESS FOR WHAT CANST THOU SAY

What Canst Thou Say? is produced by a group of Friends from around the country. We are pleased to welcome Amy Perry as a new member of the team. Amy will be maintaining the subscription records, so her address is now the circulation address for *WCTS*, as shown in the return address on the back cover. The editorial address for submitting articles is c/o Pat McBee, as described in the instructions for submitting articles, also on the back cover.

Also joining the team is Lieselotte Heil of Lewisburg, West Virginia, who will be sending out subscription reminders to people whose subscriptions are expiring.

The rest of the team is: Mariellen Gilpin in Champaign, IL; Linda Lee in Indianapolis, IN; Patricia McBee in Philadelphia, PA; and Kathy Tapp in Janesville, WI; who share editorial duties; Lissa Field in Appleton, WI, and Carol Roth in NJ, who do layout; and Roena Oesting in Coronado, CA, who faithfully puts on the labels and mails *WCTS* to all of you. We work together through the wonders of e-mail.

We say goodbye to team member Kathryn Gordon of Philadelphia, who has been helping with layout. She is now deeply engaged in producing a publication *Climbing the Walls*, by and for people in prison and their supporters.

WCTS is able to come to you because these volunteers give their time and because you share your spiritual journeys by writing for *WCTS*. Thanks to all. Thanks, too, for those who add a little extra financial contribution when sending in their subscriptions. Together we are able to sustain this worship-sharing group in print.

SURPRISED BY THE SPIRIT

by Linda Lee

The first time a spirit voice spoke to me, I was not very polite. My startled reply was, "Where did that come from?" The possibility of a slip from sanity occurred to me.

People tend to be more suspicious of visions and voices than of other mystical experiences. Even Teresa of Avila, who experienced both, considered them a lower form of mysticism. During early stages of spiritual awakening and during times of duress or trauma when we are open and vulnerable, many people have visions or hear voices for the first time. Yet visions or voices may also continue over years of increasing awareness and discernment, so I disagree about their inferiority and emphasize discernment. If visions and voices lead to spiritual growth, awareness, and to love, I believe they are valuable.

The voice that surprised me spoke soon after I learned to meditate. I was ill and had asked a hypnotist to help me with healing imagery. His post-hypnotic suggestion made it easy to count myself down into deep meditation. Daily for about a month I had been meditating.

One spring afternoon I meditated while sitting on a stone bench in a museum garden. For five days images of forgiving others and forgiving myself had come spontaneously. That day I recognized the process was complete and sat with a quiet mind. Without warning, my heart seemed to crack open – a sound – a pain – Love tore through me. In amazement I opened my eyes. Knowing something transformational had been given, I wondered whom I could talk with about this experience. A voice clearly not my own said, “Jesus could be your guide.”

For a person recovering from the Christianity of childhood and taking tentative steps toward a new view, this was a challenging message. I took it seriously. Jesus lived an authentic life, as I was learning to do. He knew how to love. For several days afterwards I felt the pain of other people, even passing strangers. Reading the newspaper or watching television was impossibly painful. My heart was open and I was learning a lesson in compassion.

Later, in a dream vision, I saw in large painted letters the command, “Take Jesus into your heart like the rising sun.” I have been slow to integrate all this message implies.

Each experience has been an amazing gift. I’ve found it helpful to remind myself that guidance leading to love has happened throughout history. George Fox heard voices in prison. God spoke to Moses, Mary, Jesus, Paul, and John. God spoke to Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc and countless others.

While traveling around the United States, I had a vision that made it possible to continue my spiritual journey here on earth. I had just crossed the continental divide in Montana and was enjoying the landscape in relaxed silence. An image of a small white truck pulling directly into my path from the shoulder flashed gently through my awareness. When I drove on, I did see a small truck parked on the shoulder. I watched carefully. The wheels began to roll in a way that would bring the truck directly into my path. I blew my horn and steered toward the other lane. The truck swerved to the far side of the shoulder and stopped so quickly it shook. I was completely calm.

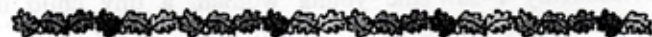
One result of these experiences has been a yearning to analyze, to understand and to talk with others. From skepticism, I became convinced that there is something we do with our consciousness or energy that permits us to hear or see the world beyond.

I learned from hypnosis to change my brain waves to alpha. I learned from a biofeedback machine how to go into theta. I also enter theta when my acupuncturist places needles in certain spots. One time a psychic offered a reading and then asked in frustration, “What are you doing?” I had been blocking his reading in some way and was able to make a shift that allowed him access. There must be some meeting of permission, intention, readiness, state of consciousness in us and whatever wants to come

to us from the world of the Spirit.

The experience of thousands of people over centuries has been that voices and visions offer insights beyond what is humanly ordinary. I know there is no scientific proof that the spirit world exists and communicates; yet faith is confirmed time and again by experience. I know my mental state, my integrity, and I know that spiritual voices guided me toward love, that a vision saved my life, and that I have ten fingers. For all and each of these, I am grateful.

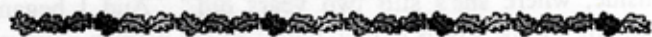
Linda Lee writes, edits, camps, walks, prays, meditates. She often worships at First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis.



“Suddenly I felt the walls between the visible and the invisible grow thin and the eternal seemed to break through into the world where I was. I saw no flood of light; I heard no voice, but I felt as though I were face to face with a higher order of reality than that of the trees or mountains... A sense of mission broke in on me and I felt I was being called to a well-defined task of life to which I then and there dedicated myself...I was brought to a new level of life and have never quite lost the transforming effect of the experience.”

Rufus Jones (1863-1948)

Quote submitted by Jan Hoffman of Mt. Toby Meeting, Amherst (MA).



BOOK REVIEW

In-Transit: The Story of a Journey by Sadie Vernon, (October 2000) Belize City, Belize: Angelus Press, Ltd., www.angeluspress.com. Suggested retail price \$12.95.

In-Transit: The Story of a Journey is the autobiography of Sadie Vernon, a Belizean Friend who has a Master's Degree in Theology from Earlham School of Religion, and was awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Award and an Honorary Doctor of Divinity. In this book she tells of her lifelong mystical experiences.

“I always knew even as a child I was different from other children...one morning I woke up very sad and my grandmother finally got me to tell her what my tears were about. I had a dream in which I saw my dear Uncle P. in a coffin in the parlor. She assured me that he was well...and he would be home soon...But a few weeks later he fell ill and never recovered. There he was in that coffin, just as I had seen him. It was devastating to a five-year-old. My grandmother took me aside for she knew I wanted an explanation. ‘You have second sight. If you

see anything like this again, don't tell everybody. Just tell me. People will want to pay you to tell them what you see."

Sadie writes of visions that came to her as an adult: "One day when I was in the U.S....I was reading the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John...I sat by a window on that beautiful afternoon. I was aware of a being outside the window; a male figure dressed in a soldier's uniform – all in white – was kneeling on one knee with a sword in a sheath in his right hand. There was no movement, no voice, and after a brief time, the vision faded. I have not understood it clearly, but I believe God has assigned me a defender. I still hope to understand it more clearly some day."

Sadie Vernon's autobiography is a story of great courage, faith, compassion and spiritual depth. She tells of her happy childhood in Belize City, her sorrow at the loss of her mother, her adjustment to life in Jamaica, her teaching successes, her sojourns with Friends in the United States, and her ecumenical work with the Belize Council of Churches. *In-Transit: The Story Of A Journey*, is edited by Judy Lumb, an American Friend living in Belize, editor of Producciones de la Hamaca.



I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, "Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted to thee."

Caroline Fox (1819-1871)

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.

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Grants for the Study or Practice of Christian Mysticism

Overseers of Friends' World Committee's Elizabeth Ann Bogert Memorial Fund make annual grants of up to \$1,000 for the study or practice of Christian mysticism.

Recent grants were given for: travel expenses to attend an international conference; studies of the mysticism of Elizabeth Underhill, Rufus Jones and Kawani Shinsui; writing a handbook for leading workshops in contemplative prayer; and a pilgrimage to Taize, an Ecumenical Christian Community in France.

Individuals wishing to apply for grants in 2001 should send seven copies of their proposal to co-secretaries of the Bogert Fund, Vinton Deming and Michelina Deming. Two or three individuals who know the applicant and are familiar with the project should be asked to send letters of reference directly to the co-secretaries as well.

Proposals should include a description of the project, the specific amount requested, how the grant money will be used, other sources of funding, and plans for communicating the results to others. Recipients are asked to send a progress report within a year. Proposal and references are due by March 1, 2001. Contact Vinton & Michelina Deming, 4818 Warrington Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143
vintdem@juno.com Phone: (215) 727-4376

I awoke; it was yet dark, and no appearance of day or moonshine, and as I opened mine eyes I saw a light in my chamber, at the apparent distance of five feet, about nine inches in diameter, of a clear, easy brightness, and near its centre most radiant. As I lay still looking upon it without any surprise, words were spoken to my inward ear, which filled my whole inward man. They were not the effect of thought, nor any conclusion in relation to the appearance, but as the language of the Holy One spoken in my mind. The words were, CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DIVINE TRUTH. They were again repeated in exactly the same manner, and then the light disappeared.

John Woolman (1720-1772)

FUTURE ISSUES.

February 2001: THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT IN QUAKER BUSINESS PROCESS.

EDITOR: PATRICIA MCBEE

Quaker business process is meant to be a time of opening ourselves to guidance and being channels of the Spirit in our world. Occasionally we actually feel that stunning presence in our meetings for business. We invite our readers to share with one another times when we have felt the hand of the Spirit guide our participation in a meeting for business, times when we came away deeply stirred, or times when a thorny problem dissolved in the ocean of light and love.

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 1.

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.

What Canst Thou Say?

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Address Service Requested

In This Issue

VISIONS AND VOICES

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.

Please write for WCTS

What Canst Thou Say? is a worship sharing group in print. It gets its energy from the generous sharing of readers with one another. Articles can be from 350 to 1500 words. Please submit your writing to Patricia McBee at 3208 Hamilton St., Philadelphia, PA 19104, or by e-mail to pmcbee@juno.com. or mail us a disk in Microsoft Word or generic text format. Thanks!

