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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

## Hospitality

### Sharing the Oneness

Jay Mittenthal

My wife and I have often opened our home to visitors for Quaker committee meetings, workshops, and travelers. “Welcome, welcome, welcome! Thank goodness you finally got here!” Wise teachers have invited me to look on any situation this way, expressing my openness to the gifts it offers. My ability to do this is pretty erratic. When the request for hospitality comes I usually accept willingly, feeling generous, curious, and eager to share the comfort of our home. Welcoming some visitors is easy. It feels like a great privilege to have had them in our home—to be in their presence, sharing a measure of their generosity and experience.

My reactions to other visitors teach me the limits of my spiritual practice. In meeting my guests I meet myself, my shadow of unwelcome traits as well as those I prefer to show. In their appearance and behavior I see my judgments and attachments. Is a guest unattractive or unkempt? Diffident or loud? Is there blood from shaving cuts on a white towel? Flexibility is not my strength; my resentments creep out when a visitor doesn’t meet my many expectations—about arrival, departure, using the bathroom, pres-

ence at meals. If I am preoccupied or react unfavorably to the visitor, extending myself on their behalf can feel like an unwelcome stretch. This

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is rich material for spiritual growth, for becoming more aware and letting go. I don’t need the structure my ex-

pectations impose; they imprison me as well as the visitor. When an eager child wants to rummage through my books, I can appreciate the voracious curiosity and overlook the intrusion. By fits and starts, offering hospitality brings me closer to where I want to be—sharing the oneness, enjoying and learning from the differences.

*Jay Mittenthal is a member of Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting, Illinois. His home is always open to Quaker visitors.*

### From the Editors

*Hospitality can be a dangerous game. The host appears at the door inviting an unknown lesson into the household, thinking mostly of offering kindness and consideration to a wayward traveler. Then the game begins. Who is this guest and what gift or challenge is brought forward? The word host has a second scientific meaning, which is symbiosis—a relationship between two people in which each person is dependent upon and receives reinforcement from the other. When Jesus asks us to become hosts to the stranger, he also invites us into a conundrum—to care for others as we would care for ourselves. But who are we?*

*Our thanks to our authors, who have shared their answers to our query so generously.*

*Maurine Pyle with Mariellen Gilpin, Editors for this issue*

# Walk with Her

Elizabeth K. Gordon

I should have prayed, meditated, walked for as long and as far as it took for fear to turn loose my heart. I didn't. I went up to my third floor room and wrote this in my journal: "I don't feel entirely clear to go ahead with having the babies come home here. My motives are definitely unclear. A friend warned that while I might think I could handle it, I probably can't. She dreamt me walking away from it all and warned that I might do that. She's probably right. It's hard though to let go of the idea." I still have that file. It's dated February 8<sup>th</sup>, eight days before the triplets were born....

The next day Kaki took Lamarr to lunch and told him that we still wanted to help, but we had changed our minds about Tahija coming home to our house with the boys. I called Tahija's grandmother Agnes Grealy and told her the same thing. She said we'd done more than most would have; we should feel okay.

I didn't feel okay. I dreaded facing Tahija. I found her propped on pillows between the stacked monitors and a pushed-aside food tray, eyes closed, a palm on her forehead. A grayness had come to her face, like a film of dust on mahogany. I thought of the girl I'd seen walking toward me across the parking lot that first day, Tweetie Bird in her arms, a bounce in her step. She looked so much more than three months older.

"Hey," she said when she saw me, opening her eyes briefly. "You want this pudding?"

I looked into the cup. "Nasty." ...I told her how much we liked her, how interested we were in her life and well-being, how willing we were to continue helping.

"You're putting me out," she said. "We can help with first and last, security deposit, all that, and if you need babysitters—"

"They're not going to let me live on my own, Kath-a-ryn."

"Who 'they'?"

"DHS!" She spoke in a stream: "If I don't have verifiable income—verifiable income, not help—they going to declare me unfit, an unfit

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*She looked me in the eye until I saw—the underside of the hawk, the splayed talons, the greedy beak.*

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parent. I told you minors can't get welfare now unless they living with an adult, so how I'm going to show verifiable income if I'm not getting a check and then I'm an unfit parent, see? They'll be waiting in the delivery room, take them right out the doctor's hands."

She looked me in the eye until I saw—the underside of the hawk, the splayed talons, the greedy beak....I left....

Late that night, on the third floor of the row house we had shared before she went into the hospital, I turned off the light and pulled my chair up to the window. In the park, lamplight lay like frost on the branches of the bare trees. From a telephone wire near the window a pair of white leather sneakers hung by their laces, the lower one turning slowly, the upper still, as if poised mid-step. A pigeon perched on the wire and began to groom itself, setting the sneakers swaying. They lulled me like a hypnotist's pendulum and I found myself remembering a Quaker meeting in New Paltz, New York. Twenty or so silent people on plain wooden benches facing the unornamented center of a plain room. The silence ran unbroken for a time, and then deepened suddenly, as a stream opening into a deep pool.

Sitting within this silence, I had seemed to drift into a sort of movie, more conceptual than visual, but I felt I could see the concepts, in a way. They were outlined against a patina of sadness, a sadness that seemed to

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be around me but not in me, at first. What I saw was American history as a series of missed opportunities to right the wrong of slavery ...

... *Noble ideals yet glowing red and gold from the forge of revolution, bent so soon with hypocrisy.*

... *Indentured servitude, by self-serving law changed to slavery (for the African servants only), and that becoming uniquely North American chattel slavery.*

... *Not following even slow England's lead and ending slavery, but importing more and more people, breeding them like animals.*

... *The Abolitionists, yes, and service on the Underground Railroad, but the back bench too.*

... *Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof.*

... *The Civil War, a nation wrenched apart, and when freedom was bought at such a ghastly price to let it slip away.*

... *Reconstruction, not the caricature but an amazing oasis, democracy proven, tried and proven and betrayed, into the hands of the insurrectionists.*

... *If Lincoln hadn't been killed...*

... *if forty acres and a mule had been given...*

... *if slave pensions had become a reality...*

... *if land grants had been granted to the freedmen too, as Sojourner Truth dreamed...*

... *if Jim Crow terror hadn't been allowed to run on so long...*

... *generations with no vote, no schools, hunger, flight ...*

... *if the cities fled to had opened their arms or given at least the grudging welcome the cheap-labor immigrants were given...*

... *if the labor unions hadn't slammed their doors...*

... *if the nation had respected the black vets come home from Europe...*

... *had given pensions and home loans and farm loans fairly...*

... *if the schools had been desegregated when the court of the land decreed them desegregated...*

... *381 days walking to get a seat on the bus... thirty-nine years old!*

... *Hoover blocking death threats,*

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**What I saw was American history as a series of missed opportunities to right the wrong of slavery ...**

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... *police cars circling a hotel in Memphis...*

... *Marian Anderson on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, "Sweet Land of Liberty,"*

... *if only King ...*

... *if only Malcolm...*

... *Rodney King on every television,*

... *and so many prime-time times a*

*night men of color in cuffs,*  
... *men and teenagers with their faces to the sidewalk,*

... *the chain as through shackled ankles running back through every era of America's making.*

Quaking, I rose to speak about what I'd seen in the silence. Only a fragment, it was enough; when I sat the quaking stopped and my breath was given back to me.

Sitting, eyes closed, I had prayed then as one washed ashore. Let me do something, let no new harm be done, let the wounds be healed, let us not miss the next opportunity, let me not miss my opportunity. Use me. Change me. Use me. If the Underground Railroad was shut down too soon . . . if this nation, conceived in liberty (what love I felt then for my country!) and dedicated, dedicated to the proposition . . . In the silence that day, sitting on the hard bench beside a white woman who'd moved her small children into Mississippi's

## **Book Review**

*Walk with Us: Triplet Boys, Their Teen Parents, and Two White Women Who Tagged Along.* Elizabeth K. Gordon. Crandall, Dostie and Douglass, September 2007, \$19.95, 320 pages.

WCTS author Elizabeth (Kathryn) Gordon writes of Tahija, Lamarr, and their triplet boys, who for almost two years share a house with Kathryn and her partner Kaki. We share Kathryn's reservations, and her spiritual experience that invites Kathryn to provide radical hospitality to Tahija and Lamarr, becoming their major childcare provider and housemate. We learn what it's like when DHS threatens to take away the boys because Tahija is presumed unfit as a poor, black teen mother. We meet Family Court, doctors, and social service agencies which do not actively encourage fathers to be involved with their families. We witness Kathryn's struggle to love and support Tahija when their ideas about childrearing create a cultural divide; Tahija moves out has a heartbreaking result. And, we are there for the healing of the rift. *Walk with Us* invites the reader to walk with the little family, expanding our hearts and minds and souls along with Kathryn's, to include those who are not so different from ourselves.

Freedom Summer and a man who tried to live the Sermon on the Mount, I was blessed with a clear perception, and responded with a clear prayer . . . to which Tahija coming into my life seemed an answer.

*Miss not your opportunity.*

In Philadelphia, I opened my eyes. The pigeon was gone. The sneakers were turning like a wind vane in the wind. *Walk with her*, I heard (a gentle voice). *Walk with her*.

But would she ever want to walk with me again? I didn't know. Kaki was at a meeting. I didn't wait for her to come home. I knew she'd be glad I had changed my mind, and it seemed to me Tahija was the first person I should tell. So I threw on boots, coat and hat and headed for the El. I wanted to knock at every door and announce it: They've been born, the triplets have been born, they're fine, they're coming home, here.

Unless I've blown it.

Had I blown it? I felt like Scrooge after his three-ghost night. If I got another chance, I sure wasn't going to blow it again.

*Elizabeth K. Gordon was on the editorial team of WCTS until the triplets were born. (Excerpted from Walk With Us: Triplet Boys, Their Teen Parents, and Two White Women Who Tagged Along.)*

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**Mrs. Paisley**

*Grant Stevenson*

Oh, how my family and I are indebted to Mrs. Paisley and all the African American women who took care of us during my childhood. I grew up in a big city middle class suburb, progressive and academic. My professional parents could afford a cleaning woman when they were very busy.

The household helpers were almost always from Cleveland's East Side ghettos Hough or Glenville. I

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*I do not remember the social inequity so much as Mrs. Paisley's paprika chicken, cornbread, after-school brownies—and her sweet tenderness.*

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do not remember the social inequity so much as Mrs. Paisley's paprika chicken, cornbread, after-school brownies—and her sweet tenderness.

Henry David Thoreau said "...confront only the essentials of life." ... "Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. ...do not trouble yourself much to get new things."

If this were true, Mrs. Paisley and the others were the epitome of Quaker simplicity, equality, and perhaps other testimonies. They met this plain living with humbleness, happiness, and without complaint—to us. They were family.

My father ironically worked at the time for a community development corporation in Hough with an African American boss. House cleaning was an important employment source, but

I hope now people are helping these communities' residents get skills and find better, more humane employment. These were the 1970's.

Mrs. Paisley's hospitality and nurturing continue to touch me to this day. Now that I'm Quaker, I hope for a little more equality for different persons from this background and eventual abolishment of socio-economically caused modern slavery.

*Grant Stevenson is a member of Lehigh Valley Friends Meeting, Pennsylvania.*

**The Guest House**

*Rumi*

*This being human is a guest house,  
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.*

**The Essential Rumi**, translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne. Harper: San Francisco, 1995.

## Welcoming the Stranger

Joan Pine

Years ago, my husband and I were persuaded to attend a two-day motivational self-help seminar often promoted to the public in large cities. Near the end of the first day, it was announced that about a quarter of the audience had come by public transportation from such a distance that they would need hospitality overnight. City dwellers with extra beds were asked to come forward and offer them.

My husband nudged me. “We have two empty bedrooms now.” I looked around the room. The attendees were as diverse a crowd as one would encounter on

any busy downtown street: a mix of ethnicities and a range of ages from young adult to old. They spanned a spectrum from well-groomed to shabbily-dressed, and a few could be mistaken for street people. I knew absolutely nothing about any of them, except that all had been drawn by the same sales pitch—no much of a screening for houseguests. My mother used to warn me not to speak to strangers, and now we were about to invite two of them to spend the night?

What came to me next were two verses of Scripture: *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. ... Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me.* Here was I, with a comfortable home and many blessings which I did not deserve any more than others who lacked them. Would I refuse lodging to Jesus or to an angel if either one turned up unrecognizable in human

form? How should I know who God might be sending us or why? I sent my husband to join the line of volunteers.

Our guests turned out to be a short and chubby white woman beyond retirement age and an equally elderly black man who smelled of tobacco and promised not to smoke inside our house. As we drove them to our home and they began to share their own stories, I began to feel an aura of Divine love. Angels or not, these strangers had come to us for a purpose, and I would treat them as honored guests. That made it easy to rise earlier than usual and offer breakfasts to order. A sense of joy came over me. In my il-

lusion that I was helping other people, I was the one being blessed!

I never saw the two strangers again, and I don't recall any content from the program we attended. However, that simple experience of overcoming my fear of providing hospitality to strangers became an important step in my spiritual growth.

Angels are defined as messengers of God. That tells me there is a reason why a particular person is sent to us, although it may not be apparent at the time. While offering hospitality is not always convenient, each occasion invites me to open my heart a little wider, to discern any messages God intends for me, and to be a gracious hostess in thankfulness for the blessings I have received.

*Joan Pine is a member of Evanston Friends Meeting, Illinois. She is retired after 17 years managing a small national consulting firm that she and her husband founded to measure the clinical quality of healthcare. She tries to remain mindful of the Divine presence in every aspect of daily life.*

## Hosting the Least

Alicia Adams

In 1998, a woman asked me if she could possibly tent on my land. Susan was looking for clean air, for a place she could rent which was not made of toxic materials such as plywood. Susan was, as I was, chemically sensitive, or what is now termed environmentally ill. It was midwinter in northern California.

I functioned almost normally in my little two-room '60's plywood cabin. I'd put out of my mind my reactions to city pollution, to indoor air pollution, to the artificial fragrances which are present in most people's hair, clothes and homes. It's true that exposure made me less than functional and if prolonged, actually ill. However, unlike Susan, the results of exposure to triggering chemicals did not cause me immediate survival problems.

Susan's reactions were much more life-threatening. She was one of our culture's throwaways. She was houseless, not because no home was provided for her (she could qualify for low-cost housing, as she was permanently disabled) but because the housing thus provided was in the most polluted areas of the city, built of toxic materials, and regularly sprayed with pesticides: death to Susan. She chose life, instead. She had been living in her good-quality tent at campgrounds, and, after having her down sleeping bag stolen from her tent when she left it to buy supplies, she slept in her car.

I wondered what I should do. Her situation resonated so deeply with me, for I too had been forced to leave my home and family due to illness and had been, for a time, truly homeless. At least she had a vehicle and regular disability income. I'd not been able to even receive food

stamps, as I didn't have an address (a requirement at that time). My heart ached for Susan, yet I didn't see how I could house her. I could barely house myself, physically and financially!

Troubled, I sat in the Light and asked to be shown my part in this situation. In my journal, I wrote, "I identify with Susan so strongly, with her situation. I have been there myself, and perhaps will be again, if I cannot provide for myself here. I can't bear to think of her leaving here in storms of winter to spend another winter sitting up in her car. What is mine to do?"

The two answers I received from my Teachers, who have been with me since childhood, shook me: I knew at a deep level both were true, though they seemed, superficially, contradictory. First, "You do not merely identify with Susan, you *are* Susan!" and second, "*You* are not responsible for *her* life."

Her life experiences and my own were so similar. I joined the Peace Corps just out of high school. I was living and working in the slums of Venezuela just when Susan, a Peace Corps volunteer, was teaching math in Kenya. We were both made chemically sensitive by DDT poisoning, and both became houseless as a result.

I invited Susan to share my home. We lived together for two years. I look back on the time with Susan as one of the most fruitful growth times in my life. It was almost impossible for me to live with her. For a time afterward, we didn't have much contact with each other. She is still someone I love—but not someone I choose to be a close friend. I am still trying on for size the double message I received from my guides when I asked what I should do.

I'd probably not have asked her to share my home and my life except that I identified with her so strongly. Looking back, I see that those who move my heart are those whose situations resonate, on some level, with either that which I've experienced or that which I've feared to experience. There were gains for both of us but overall, it wasn't a match.

I've found the guiding principle of the match very useful when looking at situations where I feel a compulsion to jump in, without reflection—or where I'm disappointed because my expectations and/or plans did not turn out as I'd hoped. To me, as I've interpreted this, a true match is one where both parties have the same spiritual intention and grounding: we are woven together in harmonious

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***I'd probably not have asked her to share my home except that I identified with her so strongly. ... We both out-sourced our need to find relief from our inner pain and injury.***

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and powerful ways. In some ways, Susan and I were a match: in areas of experience, for example. This wasn't enough. We weren't matched in our spiritual intentions or in our spiritual grounding: the path of our greatest growth. Instead, we were a match in our weaknesses.

Susan only felt secure if she was cared for, regardless of the cost to the one who gave. I'd been conditioned to serve others, even to my own detriment. This was a type of matching: it was a meshing of her personality characteristics and needs and my own. Susan and I gained—in experience of what didn't work—but we lost an opportunity for true relationship.

Now, as I see this, I am Susan in

the same sense that Jesus spoke of, when he told his followers that as they offer assistance to those considered the least, by worldly standards, they are also doing this for Him. He is identified with each of us, but particularly those who are throwaways by our culture's standards. Identified with Jesus, with the spirit which He manifests, we, too, become open-hearted and reach out to assist those ignored, denigrated and/or feared by most people.

What has been tricky for me is not this heart connection and desire to help others: that's been the story of my life! It has been difficult to realize that there are parts of myself that are also the least: aspects, memories, personality characteristics and injured parts of myself that I've suppressed, either consciously or unconsciously. I've found it far more difficult to be a willing, gracious hostess to the shut-off, silenced and untouchable parts of myself than to reach out to others.

I'm a fix-it type of person—when I see someone in trouble, I always try to find a solution for them. What my Teachers were pointing out was that I was also in trouble: my responsibility was to fix myself, first—just as Susan's responsibility was to fix herself. Susan and I both out-sourced, onto others, our need to find relief from our inner pain and injury. The phrase that keeps coming to my mind, as I ponder this today, is what the airline stewards always tell their passengers: Put on your oxygen mask before you help others with their masks.

I've found that when I come into alignment with my spiritual intention to be whole, healed and a channel of love and light to others, I automatically begin to open to all

within me that is an impediment to my intention. This is when I begin to host the least within my self. When I accept this process of opening and embrace the suppressed parts of myself, I just as naturally draw to me those individuals who are struggling with the same issues and energy. I become their host, in the best sense of this word: I welcome them, embrace them, and as is possible, I lift their spirits into light and hope, as mine have been lifted.

*Alicia Adams is a member of Berkeley Friends Meeting, California.*

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**The Testing of a Peacemaker**

*Ruth Goldboss*

**M**y friend Rose lived in a small cottage in a wooded area adjacent to a shopping mall in Florida. Nearing eighty, she was a lifelong advocate for peace and justice, and an active member of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Born Jewish, she was actively working with the Quakers, advocating for and ministering to the poor.

One very dark night, an escaped convict broke into her cottage and forced Rose to perform oral sex. She submitted to this obscenity, washed her mouth, then looked at this young man sitting with his head in his hands. Like the compassionate teacher she was, Rose began to ask him about his life. He told her of his dysfunctional family, abuse as a child, and the depravity of his parents. She listened in silence, then seemed to feel compassion replacing condemnation.

After he left, Rose's children insisted that she call the police and

testify against her attacker. At first, she resisted. Though her life was a shining example of morality, she nevertheless focused away from outrage and mentally replayed the tragedy of the convict's life. However, because of her children's insistence, Rose finally testified in court against the young man. His sentence sealed his fate. He might never see the outside world again.

Currently, during this period of world violence, I think of Rose, a simple peacemaker who had the strength to practice nonviolence, even in the midst of hideous circumstances.

I also think that when Rose died, though she was not a Christian, she so imitated the nonviolence of Jesus that I can only believe that He reached out His arms to her and blessed her as He does all the children of God who accept Jesus' challenge and blessing in the Beatitudes.

*Ruth Weisman Goldboss, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, has met and befriended many Quakers in her work as a peace activist. She attends Immaculate Conception Church in Highland Park, Illinois.*

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**Invited Into the Kitchen**

*Marty (Verna) Neidigh*

**D**irectly across a large field from my family's Plymouth, Indiana farm, trains spewed soot onto our front porch and dropped off tramps who found their way to our back porch, where they apparently knew they'd be invited in for a meal. They were invited into our kitchen where my mother would kindly fix a meal to eat at our kitchen table. However, as I remember, the tramps came one at a time, not in groups. Mother

did change to serving the meals on the back porch steps after one fellow dipped his used spoon into our family's sugar bowl! Enough was enough!

In 1965, when we bought my father's family farm near Bremen, Indiana, an upstairs bedroom had long been designated as the tramp room. Apparently tramps were welcome to spend the night in a bed.

*Marty (Verna) Neidigh has been married 62 years. Hard of hearing since birth, Marty found her way to South Bend Friends Meeting, Indiana, where her still, small voice told her, "Stay." There she has been accepted, nurtured, loved, eldered, and supported in her accessibility efforts.*

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**Entertained by Angels**

*David Blair*

In the summer of 1981, my family vacationed on the Greek island of Kos. One day I took a long walk up from the coast. Several miles into the interior, I came to a farm: a small house, a sandy field with watermelons, a pen for sheep. The farmer was nearby and I hailed him in my pidgin Greek. Nikola invited me into his house. It was absolutely simple, spotless and full of light bouncing off the white plaster walls. He sat me down and fed me a bowl of egg-lemon soup. I had never tasted such delicious soup, and I never have since. It was not just the soup. It was his generosity, the light, the day and something beyond: his house felt like home, a spiritual home. I did not put words to it, yet somehow I knew this was much more than soup.

I saw Nikola once again, with my family, and lost touch with him after we left Kos. He has appeared to me

since in visions. I have not forgotten the soup.

In the spring of 1986, we traveled to Kunming in southwestern China at the end of six months of study and travel. Some young people rescued my family of four from a long walk home from a festival, late at night: we rode to our hotel sidesaddle on the back of their bikes. We invited them for a meal at our hotel restaurant another day, and they then asked us to come to their house for dinner.

That evening a pickup truck waited for us at our hotel. We later realized they had rented it, at some cost, to give us a comfortable ride to their apartment far away. We enjoyed a wonderful meal and then the mother of the family offered to show us the Peacock Dance from her ethnic minority. We accepted, and she danced for us. It was breathtaking. She also showed us some of the Buddhist objects precious to her family, which they did not display openly. We knew we were receiving an incredible gift of trust.

Five years later, Linda and I found ourselves working with the same ethnic minority in northwestern Vietnam, and we wondered at the connection that we had first made in Kunming, entertained by people we hardly knew, whom we never saw again.

We had arrived in Hanoi on January 4 to work for the AFSC. We settled into a house owned by the son of Bac Hien (“Aunt Gentle”). Bac Hien had lost her husband during the last hours of Nixon’s “Christmas bombing” of Hanoi and had raised her children as a widow during the difficult postwar years. We wondered how she would feel about cooking lunch every day for the Americans living in her house.

Our daughter turned 15 on January 8, which just happened to coincide, in that lunar year, with the anniversary of Bac Hien’s husband’s death. She went to the countryside that day with her grandchildren, cleaned the grave and left special food, red rice, for her husband’s spirit. That evening, only four days after she had met us, she appeared at “our” house with her grandchildren, some of that red rice, and a many-tiered birthday cake for Anna.

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of this act. Only years later did I see that the gift flowed both ways. Bac Hien had been waiting 19 years to meet us. Her gift of the cake was a gift of forgiveness to us, and a gift of healing to herself. It was no coincidence that the family that

came to live with her had a daughter whose birthday fell on this special day for her.

And so with Nikola and our friends in Kunming: the soup and the dance were sacred gifts, and we gave them the gift of accepting and of seeing their gifts as precious. We saw each other as precious, in some unspoken way knowing that we were angels for each other, seeing the light shining within the other.

*David Blair teaches in the public schools and at the Mariposa Museum in Peterborough, NH. He also serves on the board and works overseas for the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding. Between 1985 and 1993 David lived in China, the Philippines and Vietnam. The inner journey of the last years has taken him to even more amazing places.*

### ***Tell Us Your Stories!***

***What Canst Thou Say*** is a worship-sharing group in print. Its richness comes from the generous sharing of readers with one another. ***WCTS*** has a vision—we want to tell the world God is much more various and wonderful than our skeptical culture allows. We hope to help Friends be tender and open to the Spirit. We need your experience—it may be just what someone else needs to know!

Articles that best communicate to our readers generally focus on specific events and are written in the first person. There is a special richness when the writer goes beyond describing the experience and tells how it has changed her or his attitude or behavior.

We welcome submissions of articles of 350-1500 words and artwork—line drawings or artwork suitable for black and white reproduction—that illustrate the theme of an issue, or that we might retain for use in future issues. Please send your text submissions in Word or generic text format and artwork in high resolution jpeg files. Photocopied art and typed submissions are also accepted. Send via email to <mariellen.gilpin@gmail.com> or diskette, or hard copy to ***WCTS, 818 W. Columbia, Champaign, IL 61820.***

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With joyous expectation we look forward to receiving your contribution to our worship-sharing group in print. —The Editorial Team of ***WCTS***: Mariellen Gilpin, Judy Lumb, Pat McBee, Eleanor Warnock

# Discovering God as Companion: Real Life Stories from What Canst Thou Say?

Mariellen Gilpin, Editor

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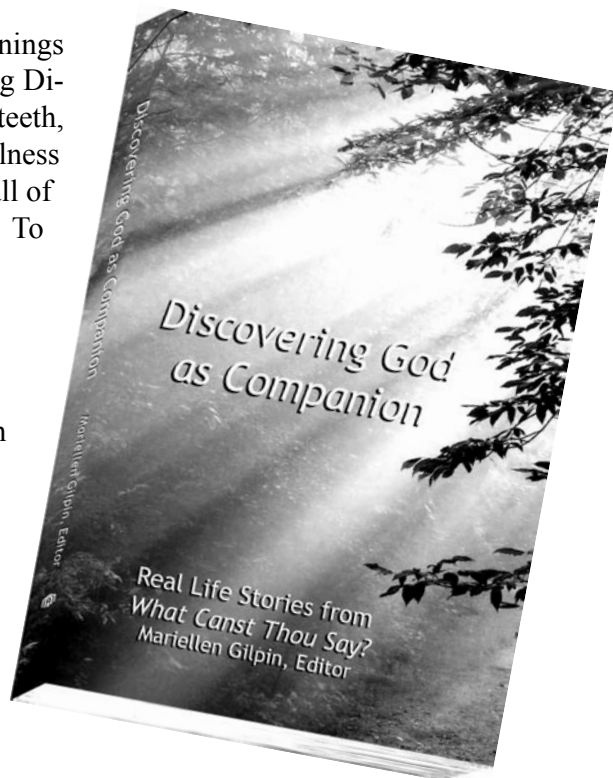
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# Please write for *What Canst Thou Say?*

(See instructions for authors on page 8)



November 2007

## **Feminine Aspects of the Divine**

**Editor: Judy Lumb**

*For in wisdom there is a spirit intelligent and holy ... she pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure. Like a fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty. (The Apocrypha, Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-5). What is your experience of the feminine in the Divine? Where do we find Her? How does She feed your spiritual life?*

Deadline: August 15, 2007

February 2008

## **Called**

**Editor: Patricia McBee**

The Lord said to Abram, "*Leave your own country, your kinsmen...and go to a country I will show you...I will bless you.*" Sometimes we are called so subtly we hardly notice; other times, like Abram, we are profoundly altered in a moment. How and when and where did you feel a call? How has your mission unfolded in the time since? How do you listen for God's continued guidance for your mission? What supports have you found for discerning and following call? Into what strange lands has your calling led you? How have you been blessed?

Deadline: November 15, 2007

May 2008

## **Transforming Conflict**

**Guest Editor: Pam Melick with Mariellen Gilpin**

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Matthew 5:44). When have you attempted to answer conflict with love? What prepared you to respond this way? What did the Spirit ask of you during this conflict? How did you respond? How did the other person respond to you? What transformations did you experience?*

Deadline: February 15, 2007

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