

Hearing and Giving Voice to the Spirit

Katherine Trezevant
The 2000 Jonathan Plummer Lecture
Presented at
Illinois Yearly Meeting
of the
Religious Society of Friends
McNabb, Illinois
July 30, 2000



Biography of Katherine Gervais Trezevant

Katherine was born in Oak Park, Illinois and graduated from Swarthmore College in 1958. She earned an M.A. in Classical Languages and Literatures from the University of Chicago. She taught classics at Rockford, Beloit, and Swarthmore Colleges and the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, PA. In 1997 she retired after teaching twenty years at the Elgin Academy in Elgin, IL.

Katherine and Robert Trezevant married in 1966. They have two grown children-Warren and Sue.

Before Katherine and her family moved to Illinois, she was a member of Radnor Monthly Meeting near Haverford outside of Philadelphia. She served as recording clerk, teacher, and administrator of their First Day School. In addition, Katherine was a member of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Women's Committee. The family transferred its membership to Oak Park Monthly Meeting in 1977. Katherine has been active there as recording and presiding clerk and

in religious education. Since 1985 she has served on the Youth Oversight Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Hearing and Giving Voice to the Spirit

Since I was asked by the Chicago South Planning Committee to do this talk last October, over nine months ago, for a long time I have anticipated standing here. All through the darkness of the winter this talk was gestating; after the vernal equinox in March when we had more sunlight and the flowers were starting to bloom, it was first put to paper. I have had the blessings and guidance of the Divine Spirit, Oak Park Meeting, my family, and many others. I am particularly grateful to Illinois Yearly Meeting for honoring its first Clerk, Jonathan Wright Plummer, with this annual lecture. For years I have sat in this meetinghouse on the last morning of Illinois Yearly Meeting sessions and been moved as I listened to one of our own deliver a talk from their experience. To hear the person I have pitched my tent near or corresponded with or had meals with or whose home I have visited speak of their journey and the Divine Spirit has always been a vital and integral part of this gathering. I am honored to be here and very grateful.

I did not grow up here at IYM. I was not one of the lively ones who run and skip over the grounds and delight this loving community as well as being delighted in it, as my son Warren was. I was not one you watched grow up and go off to experience Earlham College or another institution of higher learning or to work in the offices of *Friends Journal*. Although this meeting in McNabb, Illinois, did not help to nurture me during my earlier years, I had significant experiences as I was growing up that bring me here now.

When I first started thinking about this lecture, I was also reflecting on a quote: "Yesterday is history, today is a gift, and tomorrow is a mystery." Despite many attempts by me, members of my family, associates and librarians to verify the author of this quote, I have not been successful although it has been attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt. It is certainly well-known and it has made an impact on me as well as on many others. It occurred to me to use this quote to structure my remarks and observations, so I have divided this talk into three sections. In the first section I will trace paths I followed to bring me here today. That section is my history which was yesterday. In the second part I will share some of my experiences of being a Quaker in community. I consider our Quaker heritage a gift we all have been blessed with as we walk our paths as individuals and members of the many communities available to us. That section describes our gift of the present. Finally, I will describe some experiences I have had with ecumenism and women's spirituality. The form of both is somewhat amorphous right now, but we have some understanding of their present importance. This section refers to the future which is a mystery.

Seeing my life as a pilgrimage has been a helpful way to isolate the activities, places and people who have helped me understand my place in the universe. As you listen to me, you might reflect on your own pilgrimage. I am not describing a journey to a place but my path as I have resonated to my environment and heard and given voice to the Divine Spirit.

I grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, adjacent to the west side of Chicago. My mother and father grew up there and graduated from the same grammar school and high school as my two younger brothers and I did. When I was three, we moved to the first floor of a duplex my grandfather

bought in 1919; my mother, who will be ninety-one in September, still lives on the first floor, and Robert and I have lived on the second floor since the summer of 1977. Our family attended the Grace Episcopal Church, which was within walking distance of the house and where my paternal grandparents and parents were active parishioners and leaders in the congregation. My going to church was not simply something that I joined the family in doing. I was involved in the theology, worship, and activities; I think I realized when I was still in elementary school that how one acts in and responds to life is related to one's beliefs. At an early age I learned the concepts and vocabulary of liberal Protestant Christianity. I was interested in theological concepts: *e.g.*, the difference between predestination and foreknowledge. As a senior in high school I chose the concept of sin as the topic of a paper in expository writing class. My sense is that what was referred to as sin was not in my experience. I was beginning to trust my experience and not simply accept what I was taught and told.

Another stop in my pilgrimage was Swarthmore College, an outstanding and demanding small liberal arts college outside of Philadelphia. It was founded by Quakers and still has remnants of its heritage in addition to the building and activities of Swarthmore Friends Meeting on its campus. I imagine that many students go through Swarthmore and are not aware of its Quaker aspects. What I did learn about Quakerism at Swarthmore, though, was its respect for each individual and what he or she thinks. Also, the Board of Managers still does its business by consensus.

I struggled to find a major which would feel comfortable and be compelling. I could not imagine what that would be. I felt comfortable at the Episcopal Church and on the tennis courts; I did not feel drawn to math, the sciences, English, history or political science. I remember well the moment when I was walking to a Classics event and learned that you could major in Greek Classics. What joy I felt. I not only majored in Greek Classics, but I was accepted in the Honors program for my junior and senior years there. This Honors program consisted of taking two seminars each semester for the last two years and being examined by outside examiners, not by professors who knew you and your strengths and weaknesses. There were trial examinations at the end of the junior year; otherwise, there was no testing; you were expected to write a paper each week and present it to the others in the seminar. Each seminar met once a week for over three hours. What a remarkable experience for me -- not to be interrupted by classes and tests and to have a span of time to do the work. This situation was demanding -- not at all easy -- and very rewarding. In addition to the academic activities I learned discipline and time management and gained a good sense of my strengths, rhythms and needs. The seminar on Greek Epic gave me an opportunity to explore how the warriors and women described by Homer experienced a divine presence. As a philosophy minor, I studied the development of the idea of God in Western thought.

An interest of mine at the time was to understand the conditions which allowed Christianity to flourish and spread. A treasure from that time was a gift from my parents -- the New Testament written in Greek on one side and Latin on the other. Comparing the two languages helped compare the two cultures, which was important to me. After my sophomore year my family and I traveled to Europe where I was able to visit Christian, Roman and Greek sites. The holiness of two places remains vivid for me to this day: Assisi, the town in central Italy where St. Francis was born and lived, and Delphi, northwest of Athens in Greece. At the time I knew Delphi as the

site of the oracle of Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy and music. With my present historical awareness I now know it was a place where the Goddess was originally worshipped. Eventually the patriarchal god Apollo drove the Goddess underground.

Another significant place in the pilgrimage of my life before I became a member of the Religious Society of Friends was a summer camp in Colorado run by the Sisters of St. Anne, an Episcopal order. Here I learned about the offices the sisters recited throughout the day and their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Angelus was rung. I witnessed their intentional and hierarchical community. Eventually I became close friends of one of the sisters, a woman about the age of my mother. Sr. Winfred did not have an education beyond eighth grade, but she had a love of learning and children and an understanding of teaching that was striking. At the camp I taught young girls and found I really enjoyed teaching and being with young people. In these hills of Colorado, far from the culture and expectations of the city, growth and awareness of a very deep kind took place in me. I remember a priest marveling at how the sun rises equally on the rich and the poor and rain falls equally on the just and the unjust. Intercessory prayer became a reality to me; Sr. Winfred prayed for me as I struggled with the demands of Swarthmore College. This stop on my pilgrimage gave me an experience of vocation, community, and the reality of prayer.

Another stop on my pilgrimage was a five-day session for College Teachers and Administrators at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At that time Sr. Winfred was living in Massachusetts, and a friend of mine from Rockford was a student at ETS. This became a time to be with friends and to share theological thoughts. It was also a time to be alone for periods of time. When I was alone in the chapel one afternoon, I felt a presence and heard a voice say to me from behind, "Be still and know that I am the Lord Thy God." Was this when I started to listen to the Divine Spirit and expect an experience of that Spirit? Remembering that the words *silent* and *listen* are composed of the same letters, I think of worship as listening in the silence.

I experienced the Divine Spirit and heard a distinct message again in 1976. It felt as if the Divine Spirit put hands on my shoulders and turned me around, suggesting we move to the family home in Oak Park. We were visiting my mother and her second husband near Williamsport, PA, and she was saying that it was difficult to be an absentee landlady. At some point I realized that we were really free to go and live there. Our daughter Sue would be starting kindergarten in the fall and I was tired of the dependence on the automobile that I was experiencing outside of Philadelphia. I knew that Oak Park was a community where walking was possible and encouraged and where excellent public transportation and public schools were available. I was also eager to get back into the classroom, and Robert was ready for a break from it.

Yesterday is history. I have shared some of my pilgrimage in life -- experiences as an Episcopalian and a student at Swarthmore College. I have described two occasions when I experienced and heard the Divine Spirit.

The theme of this Illinois Yearly Meeting, however, focuses our attention on being a Quaker in community: "Wherever Two or more are Gathered: Hearing and Giving Voice to the Spirit in Friends Meetings." I present it today as a gift of the present: Yesterday is history, today is a gift.

Being a practicing Quaker is not easy, but the Society of Friends provides us with a way of worshiping and doing business and gives us testimonies and queries which equip us to meet the challenges of today. Quakerism offers us a structure that enables us to hear and give voice to the Spirit in Friends meetings.

As I describe some of my significant experiences as a Quaker, I trust you will recall similar opportunities and responses which you have had. My pilgrimage may include activities and places which you have experienced or been a part of.

Our first stop is at Pendle Hill, a Quaker center for religious and social studies near Swarthmore College outside of Philadelphia. Several months after we were married in 1966 we moved to Pendle Hill for two terms. Although Robert was a full-time student there while I taught at Swarthmore College, I felt that I was an integral member of the Pendle Hill community. I had tea with Howard and Anna Brinton in their cottage on the Pendle Hill Campus and listened each Monday evening to Henry Cadbury talk on the Bible. I became acquainted with Mildred and Wilmer Young and learned about their decision to live in voluntary poverty. I also attended my first yearly meeting. Robert and I were present at the session of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting at historic Arch Street Meetinghouse in 1967 when the decision was reached to commit civil disobedience and send medical supplies to North Vietnam. We learned in the newspaper the next day that the clerk of PYM was a sitting federal judge. He did not block the decision, but he subsequently resigned as clerk of PYM since he was officially bound to uphold the law. I was not yet a member of the Religious Society of Friends; I learned from this experience about the equality of each human being and the challenge not to take sides in war but even to extend critical aid to the so-called enemy.

Sending medical supplies to North Vietnam was one of many projects of the American Friends Service Committee. The men and women who represented the AFSC in Vietnam regularly lived at Pendle Hill during their orientation and language training. As residents at that time, we would meet them and sometimes hear their story. I heard Marge Nelson speak during that famous PYM session and knew that she was a medical doctor. Before she left for Vietnam, I became better acquainted with her and her goals. Later I vividly remember riding a bus in Philadelphia and learning by way of a newspaper headline across the aisle that three American women had been taken captive by the Viet Cong during the Tet offensive. I knew immediately that Marge was one of them. Fortunately, I was able to talk with her after she returned and learn about her experience, particularly her interactions with her captors.

The next stop on our pilgrimage after we leave Pendle Hill is Radnor Friends Meeting. Because I took a job teaching Latin at The Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, we moved to Wayne and started to attend Radnor Monthly Meeting. Radnor is a historic meeting with a meetinghouse on land which was part of the Welsh tract deeded to William Penn. It reflects Quaker history in many respects. There is a cemetery beyond the meetinghouse and a small house nearby -- the ice house where bodies were stored when the ground was too frozen to dig graves. The meetinghouse was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers from nearby Valley Forge during the Revolutionary War. In the late nineteenth century the meeting became inactive and the meetinghouse was closed and put under the care of Haverford Meeting. In 1928 Douglas and Dorothy Steere and other Friends wanted a united meeting and reopened Radnor. This became the first united meeting after the

split between the "Orthodox" and "Hicksite" branches in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in the early nineteenth century. Radnor Meeting thus was a member of both Orthodox and Hicksite yearly meetings. The two yearly meetings gradually reconciled, but the reunification of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting did not take place until 1955.

In the early 1970s Radnor meeting celebrated the 250th anniversary of the meetinghouse building. An earlier meetinghouse was destroyed by fire. There was a wonderful celebration. Robert worked with Margaret Hope Bacon, the Quaker historian, on the script for a presentation of Radnor's history, and period costumes were featured. It was easy to imagine horse-drawn carriages arriving.

Meanwhile, I became very active in the meeting. I learned about the queries and the importance of the business meeting and was active in the running of the First Day School. I eventually joined Radnor Meeting. Douglas and Dorothy Steere welcomed me, driving out from their home on the campus of Haverford College to our home in Malvern. These internationally-famous Quakers were not too busy to do this job of oversight. I still remember Douglas talking to Robert and me about the democracy of Quaker process.

The third stop on our Quaker pilgrimage is Illinois Yearly Meeting. In the 1980s I followed with interest Peter Theodore's request to IYM to become a released Friend and work with Young Friends. His ability to work with young people was evident and a joy; my son Warren's response to him was immediate. When IYM decided to set up the Youth Oversight Committee to continue with Peter's work, I was moved to volunteer to be on that committee. Although I was teaching full-time and had an active family, I volunteered. The first meeting was here in McNabb in September. I had never driven down alone. That experience here was inspiring and formative for me. Jerry and Mary Nurenberg were present. Mary was pregnant and gave birth to Ken in October. Roy Treadway and Kai Immler were present. We sat in the west room of this meetinghouse that Saturday and listened to the Spirit. We were concerned about what we needed to do with our Young Friends. The decision which was reached that day continues to inform what we do today on the Youth Oversight Committee: We pass on to our Young Friends the Quaker way of doing business. Our decision was Spirit-led and clear, and we have been able to implement it. Of course, in order to do business the Young Friends needed to have a place to meet. The Fox Hole was transformed from a storage shed to a meeting place. The Young Friends have presiding clerks and a recording clerk, and they have a nominating committee and committees for clearness as well as an epistle committee. Since Young Friends, however, are generally with us for only three or four years, we experience much change and challenge. But it is important to keep in mind life at IYM for children. David Westling, for example, has been coming to IYM longer than many adults, and he is only sixteen years old. The bonds our young people form here are strong and, in many cases, lasting. My son Warren is now thirty-one-years-old and lives in San Francisco; he still keeps in touch with people he knew only through IYM. You would be amazed at how effective e-mail has been in Fox Hole friendships. And sometimes our Fox Hole graduates provide leadership for the current Young Friends. When Warren was at the University of Illinois and attending meeting there, he agreed to be on the committee responsible for Friends Under Nineteen (FUN). The committee came up with the suggestion for the Young Friends to be away from the IYM grounds on Friday and explore Starved Rock. The Young Friends still leave the IYM grounds on Friday each IYM, but recently they have been

going to a water park, not a state park or nature conservancy. On Thursday and Saturday Young Friends have two workshops-at 10:00 and 11:00. At 9:00 on Thursday they have a meeting for business; on Saturday they present their epistle to the adult session of IYM. Last year Margie Haworth spoke to the Young Friends in the Fox Hole about her decision to go to Costa Rica and what she has been doing there. Margie was a Teen Clerk at IYM for many years; she also organized an IYM potluck during Parents Weekend at Earlham College when my daughter Sue was a senior there.

Being on the Youth Oversight Committee has been important and rewarding for me. I was hesitant, though, to accept leadership of the Youth Oversight Committee. I remember well the moment when that hesitation evaporated. I happened to be in a business session and learned that the Nominating Committee had not been able to find anyone to clerk the YO Committee. I knew immediately that I needed to consider clerking it, although I seemed to have less time than in 1985. For awhile I mainly networked with people at IYM and on the phone. Eventually, we started to have formal committee meetings. It took me awhile to learn that networking and talking on the phone are different from gathering with two or more and listening to the Divine Spirit.

At one point my position on the Youth Oversight Committee opened up an important opportunity for our family. We were having our customary Quake between Christmas and New Year's Day at the Downers Grove Meetinghouse and I was alone on the second floor meditating. The phone rang; Betty Winker was calling about a spaghetti dinner that evening to raise funds for a Kenyan student. During the Young Friends business meeting there had been some discussion about possibly supporting a student from Kenya. However, concerns arose about finding an appropriate student and monitoring the legitimacy of any request. When I explained all of this to Betty, she immediately assured me that Downers Grove Friends Meeting had, in fact, supported a Kenyan student who was known by an American who worked in a Quaker School there. That American had come to Downers Grove Meeting at some point and talked about the school and giving help. At my request Betty helped me contact this man, Andrew Miller, who it turns out grew up in Oak Park and now teaches African-American studies at Union College in Schenectady, New York. He remains a source of inspiration and information to me. Through him the Young Friends for a while supported a worthy student, Philip, who is just now graduating from a university and hopes to teach. When Robert and I were in Kenya in 1997, we met Philip's brother and spent the afternoon with him. It was helpful to be able to dialogue with him about the family and its structure. In 1992 Sue went to Kenya for a term during her third year at Earlham College. Robert and I are now supporting her host brother as he attempts to gain skills working with automotive engines. We cherish our relationship with these young men and look forward to being with them in Kenya at some point.

The next stop on our pilgrimage is Oak Park Monthly Meeting. A fortunate circumstance happened this year. Our newly-appointed clerk, Pam Timme, volunteered Oak Park Meeting to write the queries and be responsible for the worship-sharing sessions during IYM this summer. Judy Erickson, Oak Park Meeting's newest member, joined Pam in a subsequent Chicago South Planning session. The commitment has involved the entire meeting not only in a weekend with Barry Zalph, the IYM field secretary, but also a quest for queries and experience with them. In addition it kept the theme and many of its ramifications in my awareness the entire year.

Oak Park Meeting's Query Quest, as Judy Erickson phrased it in the recent *Among Friends*, became specifically the province of the Ministry and Worship Committee. However, there was no one available to assume the leadership of the committee. Not daunted, the members of the committee continued on by rotating the leadership. And the Spirit provided. I remember being very tired one Sunday evening, but I had faith in the process and the Spirit. We were not efficient, but we were Spirit-led.

Quakerism is a gift for all of us. It is not an easy path, but it offers us a way to hear and give voice to the Spirit in Friends meetings. And Friends meetings include meeting for worship, meeting for business, committee meetings at the monthly meeting and yearly meeting level and gatherings at the local, regional, national and international levels. We have a remarkable heritage and wonderful spiritual communities.

I want to turn now to the last part of this presentation: The mystery of tomorrow. We do not know what the future holds, but we may get glimpses of it. And we know to pay attention to the unfolding of the future, since continuing revelation is an aspect of our Quaker faith. I have had some noteworthy experiences with ecumenism and women's spirituality which I want to share with you.

I will describe first my experience with the Taize brothers and ecumenism. I met Robert Trezevant at a worship service of members of the Taize community, an ecumenical Protestant order begun after World War II in Lyons, France. Sr. Winfred, whose religious community had a retreat led by some of these brothers, told me about them. She learned that three Taize brothers would be living and working at the University of Wisconsin in Madison for the academic year 1965-1966 at the invitation of the campus ministry association. She knew that I would be studying there and suggested that I find out what these brothers were doing and meet them. It was not difficult to locate them. They often worshiped at the Episcopal Center where I was active. I attended a program they gave and started attending their Lenten services. Eventually, I went to the place where they lived to participate in their evening office. Robert was there too. He had recently joined the Society of Friends and was very concerned about the war in Vietnam. Although he was not granted Conscientious Objector status, he wanted to do some sort of peace work. He moved to Philadelphia in June of 1966 to work for the American Friends Service Committee, and we were married by two Taize brothers we met in Madison in a room in the Swarthmore Meetinghouse in late August a few months later.

These Taize brothers were important models for Robert and me. They lived in community and taught us to consider ourselves a community. They each came from a different country -- Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden. The scope of their intercessory prayer was extensive. However, after we married and were living in Philadelphia -- not Madison, Wisconsin -- we no longer had that community to worship with. Was I to worship in the Episcopal Church or with the Quakers? This was not an easy choice for me. In fact I did not become a member of Radnor Friends Meeting until after our second child was born and welcomed into the Radnor community. By that time I was very active in the meeting and fully expected to even be buried in the cemetery there when I died. I think, however, that the Taize community provided us with a glimpse of the future -- of the possibilities of ecumenism. As I understand it, their definition of

ecumenism has changed and broadened. When we were close to them, they were a protestant monastic community that was reaching out to Roman Catholics.

Ecumenism originally meant furthering Christian unity. Douglas Steere served as the Quaker Observer for three sessions of Vatican Council II and at the Anglican Lambeth Conference in London in 1968. The year before, he drew together a colloquium of Zen masters and Christian spiritual leaders in Japan and a similar group of Hindus and Christians in India. Today ecumenism refers to activities and dialogue with Jewish, Moslems and other religious traditions. Oak Park, where I live, welcomes diversity. In a storefront which used to be a small grocery store there is now the Shem Center for Interfaith Spirituality. This is its stated mission: to create "a sacred space for all...a place where the sojourners of all spiritual paths and faith traditions, as well as the spiritually homeless, are welcomed." The director of the center is a member of the Dominican Order who incorporates everything from Jewish prayer dancing to Native American spirituality. I met him when he was leading a Dance of Universal Peace for Limina, a local women's spirituality group I am active in. There is an Oak Park Circle of Dances of Universal Peace which has monthly dance meetings. Some of the traditions represented are Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Sufi, Native American, Goddess, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Universalist, and Aramaic. Here at IYM the Youth Oversight Committee encourages its own version of ecumenism. It urges the teens to attend Youthquake, an experience where they meet Friends from various backgrounds. During this session of IYM Young Friends have prepared to attend the Young Quakes Conference 2000 here in McNabb which FGC puts on and Youthquake 2000 in Seattle this coming December.

Tomorrow is a mystery, but I think we get a glimpse of the future in the ecumenical activities and efforts of the Taize brothers and the Shem Center in Oak Park. We get a glimpse of more comfortable relationships with those who do not share our beliefs. Another area where the future is glimpsed now is women's spirituality.

A stop on this pilgrimage is the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology, which meets each year over Memorial Day weekend. For many years it met at Haverford College. We were active in this organization while we lived in the Philadelphia area. Many members of the organization were professionals in Jungian psychology. In 1968 I heard a talk by the Quaker Jungian analyst Elinid Kotschnig which riveted my attention. She talked about the Greek goddesses and their relevance today. At the time I was teaching the exploits of Julius Caesar in Latin to bright girls at The Baldwin School in nearby Bryn Mawr and thinking that I was *au courant* because I was relating what Caesar did to our strategy in Vietnam.

The next stop is the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Women's Committee which I was active on while we still lived in the Philadelphia area. Publishing *Friendly Woman* was our responsibility then and we were busy with a skit for a Friends General Conference (FGC) evening program at Ithaca College in 1976. Margaret Bacon was also on the committee. At the time, she was working at the AFSC and was busy researching the life of Lucretia Mott. She felt strongly that the role of Quaker women in the history of equality and reform needed to be known. At the time there was also the sense that women in Quaker history was a timely topic. At the IYM Quaker Women's Weekend this past April Sandra Huntley talked with me about the three skits of that evening's program from the point of view of the IYM women. Their skit was created after they

had some theological discussions and was called: "Conversations with God." In that skit God was first on top of a ladder. As the conversations took place, God climbed down the ladder to talk with the women. Sandra also remembers the excitement and the report of IYM women after they returned from FGC in Berea in 1975. It was there that the hopes for an evening FGC program focused on women had originated. The third skit in 1976 at Ithaca was by women of New York Yearly Meeting. It was a meeting for business which featured Elizabeth Watson and non-sexist language. The women were not comfortable, for example, finding someone to "man" the punch bowl.

Although the women's evening program at Ithaca in 1976 was significant, the workshop I chose had a more lasting impact on me personally. It was on androgyny and led by women from Illinois Yearly Meeting. And the women in the workshop were IYM women: Allie Walton, Linda Lorenz and Sandra Miller -- now Sandra Huntley. Months before I had any inkling that I would be moving to Illinois I met this cohesive group of IYM women who welcomed me when I arrived in Illinois the next summer. Soon these IYM women accepted the responsibility of publishing *Friendly Woman* and the editorial meetings took place at my home in Oak Park, a central location both for Allie and those coming from the south. After *Friendly Woman* moved on, the IYM women continued to meet, and for a long time Allie Walton brought us together. Now the group meets during each IYM session and has an annual weekend in April here on IYM grounds.

Meanwhile, these experiences impacted my teaching. You may remember my response to Elinid Kotschnig's talks entitled "Womanhood in Myth and Life" in 1968 at the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology. These talks created a desire within me to share the experience of the goddesses with my students at Elgin Academy where I taught for twenty years after we moved to Illinois. How was I to do this? I attended a workshop on "Teaching Classics to Talented Students" at Carleton College the summer of 1980 given by my former Swarthmore classmate David Porter, who was then teaching Classics at Carleton. I shared with him my desire and frustration. He talked with me about an assignment he gave his mythology students -- having them do a creative activity. The following year my second year Latin class put on an impromptu version of the Judgment of Paris. It was vivid, helpful, fun and memorable. Later my seventh and eighth graders used video cameras to enact scenes of mythology. I still treasure a five-minute presentation of the Trojan War by some eighth-grade boys which highlights most of the significant aspects of that conflict. I also discovered that the goddesses helped me understand different ways of being a woman and helped me discuss these different ways with my students. Athena, the extroverted goddess of civilization, was born from her father's head fully armed. Artemis, the introverted goddess of the hunt, was also independent but much more solitary. Demeter, goddess of the harvest, delighted in being a mother and was devastated when her daughter Persephone was taken by Hades, the god of the underworld. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, enjoyed relationships and being in the spotlight.

I was also encouraged in this approach by a book I bought here at IYM in the early 80s as I was standing in a long line on Sunday waiting for the last meal of the session. In those days we did not have the central display area in the west room, and books for sale were placed on tables facing the meal lines in the back of the room. From a distance I saw the title *Goddess* and the name Christine Downing. I felt that it was meant for me and bought it immediately. Christine

Downing graduated from Swarthmore College a few years before me and was active as a Quaker in the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology; she has written several books on the role of myth in our lives. The first woman president of the American Academy of Religion, she dares to be both scholarly and personal in her books. In *Goddess*, published in 1981, Downing tells the story of her life through her understanding of and experience with the individual Greek goddesses. She subtitles her book "Mythological Images of the Feminine." This book spoke to me both as a woman and as a teacher who wants her students to honor these myths and delight in them as I do.

My work with the goddesses, however, is more than an interest and related to my profession as a classicist. It is supported by an experience I had in 1981 when Robert and I were in Europe. We visited a friend who was living in Zurich and studying at the Jung Institute in nearby Kusnacht. After a brief visit in their home, we took the trolley to Kusnacht to tour the Institute. Robert and I first walked next door to view Carl Jung's home from the front. Over the portal there is a phrase in Latin which I did not know about. The phrase is this: "Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit"; this is the translation: "Called and not called, God will be present." However, I stood there and saw something else. This is what I saw: "Vocata atque non vocata Dea adest." The gender of the participles and noun was changed from masculine to feminine, and the tense of the verb was changed to the present. This is my translation of the new reading: "Called and not called, the Goddess is present." I gasped and shared the experience with Robert, who was standing next to me. After a brief moment I calmly and gratefully accepted the reality of what I had just read and experienced, that the Goddess is present.

Another individual and notable experience occurred when Robert, Warren and I were driving to Boone, North Carolina, for Friends General Conference in 1988. I had been reading Mary Renault's marvelous fiction *Bull From the Sea*, a story which deeply resonated with me. When I was meditating in the car as we were passing through Kentucky, I felt myself swept under the ocean and placed low on the steep western slope of the Acropolis in Athens at the mouth of the cave where there was a shrine to the Goddess. This experience became a call to me to investigate pre-Classical Greece and eventually Neolithic Crete. I was already shifting my attention from the period when paganism and Christianity were intersecting to this much earlier period. At Swarthmore College I had already spent a fair amount of time investigating Minoan Crete in the seminars on Greek Epic Poetry and Ancient Art. Next May Robert and I will go on the Goddess Pilgrimage to Crete sponsored by Limina.

My contact with Quaker women has helped raise my consciousness. I remember when an interest group in the Women's Center at an FGC Gathering was formed to "Dismantle the Patriarchy." At the time I did not know what "patriarchy" was much less ways to "dismantle" it. However, it did not take me long to understand the concept and see the reality of patriarchy in far too many places. At Elgin Academy I eventually decided to not even teach the activities of the general Caesar or the orations of the statesman Cicero, but to focus on the lyric Poetry of Horace and Catullus in my advanced Latin classes. In 1986 Robert gave me the book *The Creation of Patriarchy* by Gerda Lerner. According to her, patriarchy has existed for three thousand years but is not a natural imperative. Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade*, which was published in 1987, describes archaeological discoveries of civilizations which were not hierarchical, male dominant and violent. To learn in addition that women in Neolithic Crete had high social,

economic, political and religious positions and were equal to men was encouraging to me. This winter I was in a book group where we read *The Living Goddesses* by Marija Gimbutas, an extraordinary archaeologist who was a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles; she died in 1994. This book, published in 1999, shows how extensive the Neolithic religion was.

For several years I have been active in Limina, an organization which was established in 1985 and is based in Oak Park but has members throughout the metropolitan Chicago region and elsewhere. Limina is the plural of the Latin noun "limen" meaning threshold and refers to the cycles of a woman's life and the many thresholds she passes psychologically and spiritually. Limina often bases its events on myths, stories and traditions. Recently I have used a book of daily meditations which manifest the Feminine Divine and was written by Patricia Monaghan. Published in 1999, it consists of prayers and invocations from classical writers and Hindu poets as well as folksongs of Lithuania and West Africa. I am interested each day to see from what era and from what part of the world the day's selection comes.

My experiences with women's spirituality have occurred both within and outside the Religious Society of Friends. Although there is an abundance of writing and art work on the subject and many organizations to join, the change of consciousness is just beginning. We simply do not know how the future will unfold; tomorrow is a mystery. Meanwhile, a major challenge of the present is to welcome and accept diversity as we listen to the Divine Spirit within and observe Its work without. The faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends equip us to meet the challenge.

Thank you for going on these pilgrimages of yesterday and today with me and listening to my experiences of ecumenism and women's spirituality. To me Quakerism is a call to nurture our own Inner Seed and to respect the Inner Light in others. It is a call to realize equality, harmony, simplicity, and community. Quaker testimonies and history have encouraged us and helped us develop our leadings and concerns in the past and will continue to do so. We need to continue hearing and giving voice to the Spirit, especially wherever two or more are gathered in Friends Meetings.