Among Friends

Fall 2012



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Editor's Note

I'm the new *Among Friends* editor -- thanks for your patience, readers, as I learn the layout program -- and presently a student at the Earlham School of Religion. I am delighting in learning about the tradition which has spiritually formed me and so many thousands over three and a half centuries. One thing striking in Quaker history, which I am now studying, is the itinerance of the earliest Friends. Many felt called to travel, which wasn't easy to do in pre-industrial times. Samuel Bownas, an 18th century English Friend who was born shortly after George Fox began preaching, came to America twice, and his second return voyage to England was perilous.

Friends today remain travelers because we are few in number and greatly dispersed. As a yearly meeting we come together but once annually from four states. But *Among Friends* offers traveling ministry by sharing reflections, reports, and pending matters. *Among Friends* can be a way of staying in touch without traveling, of attending to the ministry of others, and of remembering what makes us a Religious Society of Friends.

Please enjoy what you read here and consider contributing a report, poem, writing, or art to the next issue. What canst thou say?

Marcia Z. Nelson

Published twice a year, *Among Friends* is a publication of the Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends and provides a forum about activities within the various meetings and worship groups that make up Illinois Yearly Meeting. *Among Friends* also provides pertinent information provided by Quaker organizations and by interested readers. Readers are reminded that signed articles and letters express the view of the writers and not official positions of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

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Submission Information

Among Friends is looking for items that contain first person reflections, whether spiritual reflections, reflections on programs/project of monthly meetings or reflections on service that have their foundation in one's Quaker faith and practice, as well as reflections on the work of monthly meetings and yearly meeting committees. Poetry, artwork and photographs related to the above are also sought.

All submissions should be sent to the editor. Deadline date for the next issue, Spring 2013, will be Feb. 28, 2013.

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Seeking a Natural Connection in an Unnatural World

Nancy Halliday, Evanston Monthly Meeting

Those who love and work with the natural world eventually must come to terms with the human place in nature. Recent innovative research on primates, cetaceans, parrots and others has revealed unexpected chinks in the wall separating humans from animals. Now as we search the universe for life elsewhere, these questions that attempt to define humanity and intelligence become more than mere curiosities.

One of the hallmarks of Western civilization is its very alienation from nature. We are taught that our intelligence bestows on us moral and intellectual superiority over the rest of Creation. We reject and fear our "bestial" nature, regaling it in tales of vampires, werewolves and witches.

The result is a state of separatedness that is the curse of Western society. Alienation creeps into our relations with one another and confuses our own identity. We long for something missing but know not what. Many passively accept this fate, trading presumed rewards in the afterlife for the joie de vivre on earth that should be the human birthright.

If we met our animal nature directly, would we find it so evil? A case of a physician who documented her own stroke after her recovery recalled a blissful state of living only in the present when she experienced vast augmentation of her senses and awareness of her surroundings, during which language and reasoning were useless. Is this not the animal reality—ingenuous and fiercely alive? What is there to fear?

We propose to know when and how intelligence originated, but our affinity to animals haunts us, and the story of our emergence is still clouded. Often the power of allegories can reveal truths hidden from conscious perception. I remember seeing an artistic depiction of a radiant angel presenting a book to a hairy, bearded satyr (half man, half goat), who cringes against a cliff in terror (of the responsibility for rational thought?). Is not the Biblical story of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden telling the same tale—the painful sundering of our peace with nature and the emergence of civilization?

Is it possible to unify these parts of our nature, and find the restitution we need? One place to look for an answer is in the wisdom of aboriginal people, who have always maintained strong ties with nature.

> The story of our emergence is still clouded.

Indigenous people recognize that animals have senses we lack, magnetic sensibility for one. It seems no coincidence that Australian aborigines paint themselves with iron-rich red earths in ceremonies that transport their spirits back to the Dreamtime, when humans and animals were one. It is said that the Inuit have 50 words for snow. In like manner, the Navajo have given names to each subtle phase of the dawn. Navajo constellations do not merely occupy sky space; they extend over time as well. In late winter, the appearance of a certain star in the Great Feather signals the thunder to rumble over the land, awakening the hibernating animals, and once more spring emerges in the eternal

collaboration of all the elements of nature on the sky and on the earth.

This presents a profoundly different world view, one of participation in a universe of beauty, order and goodness. Indigenous people believe their seasonal rituals honoring the earth to be essential components of a functioning cosmos, fulfilling the place of humans in the universe as harmonizers. In contrast, Westerners coolly observe nature as analyzers, seeking ways to control it through isolation of its components.

This difference—participation versus observation, integration versus compartmentalization—seems as insuperable as the struggle to consolidate quantum theory with Einsteinian relativity. Both have unique insights and have enriched humanity, but the whole truth is yet to be found. As scientists work toward the ultimate theory, we must commit ourselves to the ultimate spiritual and moral questions of our time.

Our evolution is not finished.

A Book of Hope and Comfort

Carolyn W. Treadway, Bloomington-Normal Monthly Meeting

Janet Means Underhill has compiled a little booklet that brings readers just what the title says: *A Book of Hope and Comfort* (printed by the Ministry and Advancement Committee of ILYM). This small, easy-to-read booklet includes quotations from scripture and from Quaker writings, and also meaningful poems by several persons, including Janet Underhill's hopeful poem "The Journey":

> A time of darkness covers the land.
> We stumble, seeking to find the way
> through this place of pain.
> It seems we are deserted, alone.
> In the darkest of the night, in the
> deepest of despair,
> The unseen love of God holds us and
> carries us on.
>
> Incrementally, we adjust to a new
> way of living. ...
> Life opens to be lived fully again.

Even if readers are not believers in God, nor part of any religious group, this collection hopefully will be relevant, because it describes universal experiences and is pertinent to many kinds of difficulty and loss, not only to bereavement. Flower drawings enhance the beauty of six pages. This booklet can be distributed in bulk to Monthly and Yearly Meetings, churches, hospitals, counseling centers, support groups, and any place where persons could be gifted by this little volume.

Copies may be obtained from the author, at 1260 N. Western Ave., #203, Lake Forest, IL 60045, at $1.50 per copy.

Weeds

Mariellen Gilpin, Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather up the tares?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

(Matthew 13:27-30)

The weeds we have with us always.

I am in recovery from 30-plus years of mental illness, and recently stopped all medication entirely. A friend suggested that I should share what I have learned about replacing medication with self-management. "A lot of people could be helped," she said. At the same time, I had been taking advantage of the currently moist soil conditions to get a few (wheelbarrows full) of weeds, and reflecting that Jesus' parable applies to poor thought-habits: they are like weeds. For instance, weeds take up all the nourishment from the good plants. Many of my mentally ill friends devote large amounts of their severely limited incomes to supporting their addictions rather than themselves. As I continued to pull weeds, other parallels come to me.

The weeds we have with us always.

All of us have some negative thought-habits about something. It is certainly true that no matter how many weedy thoughts we pull out of our inner garden, there will always be more. But that does not mean we cannot ever get better. In my experience, giving God a faulty thought-habit means God gives it right back to me—along with better ways of dealing with it. One actually can have a great deal of hope, if not of weed eradication, then of weed management. Here are some principles of weed management:

Weeds propagate quickly. One weedy thought leads to another, and another. I can start by grieving once again about something my mother did when I was six; pretty soon I am obsessing and feeling sorry for myself, feeling again an old anger and sense of helplessness. Next thing I know, I am awakening in the night hallucinating. One kind of weedy thought means others will soon follow.

A quick fix with chemicals creates problems of its own. Farmers were just starting to use weed killers when I was growing up. The weeds in the fence-rows on our farm were sprayed and immediately began to droop—and then began to grow again—sideways. The sprays, meant to save time spent mowing weeds, simply made it necessary to cut the weeds anyway—a task made impressively more difficult, because now the weeds weren't tall and straight, but had grown in a tangle and clogged the mower. A poor thought-habit treated with chemicals is still there, only harder to figure out because I cannot think as well. Better living through chemistry does not fix the problem, it simply makes it harder to think through to a better solution.

Weeds propagate in different ways—seeds, roots, stems, rhizomes—and some reproduce several ways at once. A weedy thought may have taken root as a means of surviving childhood, for

example the thought that I am a victim so unable to better my condition. Feelings of victimhood may cause me to make impulsive choices—but an impulsive choice, often as not, relieves my immediate sense of helplessness by creating a longer-term bad situation. The longer-term consequences reinforce my sense of victimhood and helplessness.

It is important to observe how the weedy thought propagates. If I dig a dandelion but leave half the root, I will shortly have a new dandelion from the old root. Helplessness learned in childhood has a deep root, particularly if someone enforces my sense that there is no way out of a situation. If my husband catches me eating chocolate and confiscates my stash, my first impulse is to buy a dozen candy bars and become sneakier about eating them. It is only by an effort of will that I can stop behaving like an impulsive and overweight victim and instead say to myself, "O.K., what is it I really want? Will I continue to choose short-term pleasure over long-term benefit? How do I choose to keep my focus on my long-term goal?" Maybe my goal needs to be not getting skinny, but building a sense of efficacy—to work on the root of the perennial weed.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Not-thinking about chocolate means I will think about nothing but chocolate. Not thinking of myself as a victim requires a conscious choice what to do instead. What better approach will I put in its place? For me, building a sense of myself as an effective person requires me to tell my husband, lovingly and clearly, that behaving like a parent will not have his desired effect and to follow up in that same discussion by telling him my own method of managing the chocolate craving. Not only must I make a healthier choice about chocolate, but also about behaving like a victim.

Be careful what you plant instead. If my cherry tree dies because of borers, I do not choose to plant another cherry tree in the exact same place. If feelings of disempowerment make me think of chocolate, I should not substitute one weedy habit for another. Instead I consciously choose a healthier thought: "No matter who is responsible for the fix I am in, I am the only one responsible for whatever choice I make now. Will I react emotionally, or will I make a healthier choice?"

A corollary to being careful what you plant: *Just because a plant is beautiful or useful does not necessarily mean it is a good choice.* It is not wise, for instance, to plant tomatoes in the same place I grew potatoes last year; both are subject to the same diseases and pests. For a number of years, I was unable to pray without hallucinating, because I was praying for others' healing. I decided to substitute other forms of prayer. But guess what? Praying of any sort quickly led to praying in healing. My husband made the analogy that if I were allergic to chicken, the solution was not choosing to eat this part rather than that part, but avoiding chicken altogether. Eventually I came to understand that I was using prayer as a way of escaping feelings of shame. The only way to face the shame was to learn better ways of solving ordinary problems; then prayer could be restored to me. Prayer can be a wonderful support to the spiritual life, but not if it is a form of escape from my most pressing spiritual challenge. Any good or beautiful thing used primarily as a form of escape can be detrimental to self and others.

Do not cultivate weeds. If feelings of disempowerment lead me to impulsive choices, it is not wise for me to watch superhero movies, for instance. Superheroes see an obvious injustice perpetrated by an obvious bad guy, and they swoop in, beat up the bad guy, and save the busload of innocent school children. Distracting from the pain of victimhood can be done in ways that actually pack fertilizer around the roots of impulsive behavior: they may breed the idea that really competent people always solve knotty

problems quickly, and get it right the first time—with no mess to clean up afterward. Encouraging impulsiveness in the process of distracting oneself from a sense of helplessness is a good way of making a bad situation worse.

How do I tell a weed from a good plant?

What makes a plant a weed is its invasiveness; it is like an addiction, in that it takes over everything. Here are some queries to aid in the internal weed management of behavioral addiction :

What is its growth habit? How can I reliably tell a corn plant from autumn foxtail, when both are three inches high and both are grasses? A lot of thoughts appear harmless enough when they are just beginning to appear. For instance, I have a recurring habit of misguided compassion: offering support to someone who is not making a good faith effort to keep his own internal garden weeded. Compassion is good but it can look a lot like misguided compassion. Misguided compassion, in codependency parlance, enables the other to continue to avoid responsibility for his choices. "Oh, you had such a rotten childhood. I will excuse your self-destructive behavior and see that you get a good meal—this time." I am trying to learn to recognize misguided compassion and work instead for compassionate objectivity: "I do not need to judge you harshly, but I also do not need to aid and abet your continued choice to do harm to yourself."

Do I secretly want this plant to take over? What do I gain by harboring this weed? Basically, what I gain by not changing a self-destructive behavior is that I do not have to change. Change is hard work. Changing requires me to recognize the fear and anxiety that leads me to take care of the addict. It requires me not immediately to assuage my fear and anxiety by enabling the other not to pay the penalty herself.

Compassion is a good plant. Misguided compassion is a weed. How do I tell them apart? How do I not pull up the compassion along with its weedy lookalike? There is a very simple test. When I hear the sad story, I say to the other, "That is a terrible situation you are in. What are you going to do about it?" Be sympathetic, but put the responsibility where it belongs. If, for example, the other person response, "I'm feeding the addiction when I need the money to feed myself. I think I will try the nicotine patch," then I can reasonably say, "Show me the receipt when you decide to give the patch a try and I will reimburse you." I know the bus trip from his apartment to the store is a half-day commitment, and then there will be a week's delay between mailing me the receipt and his receiving my check. If he decides to take me up on my offer, he already has considerable investment in making it work. When I reimburse my friend, I say, "Let me know how it is going." If there is a setback, I can still say, "How might you do it differently next time?"

Compassion is a good plant. Misguided compassion is a weed. How do I tell them apart?

What did I learn about this plant in my birth family? Why did I plant this invasive species? For instance, I learned that growing lots of cabbage meant we could make sauerkraut, which we ate during the winter. I also learned misguided compassion: if I took care of my mother, maybe she would be less likely to further destabilize the household. Feeling taken care of appeased her—sometimes—but simply made her more determined to be impulsive.

What do I really think about this plant that I have known since childhood? Am I getting what I really want from it? Sauerkraut, for instance, is

full of salt. I no longer raise so much cabbage that sauerkraut is my only option for preserving it. In the same way, I have learned that when my desire to take care of another is driven more by anxiety than objective good sense, it is time to say to the other, "Gosh, what are you going to do about it?"

Is this a good plant in the wrong place? Keeping one burdock plant because it is good for intestinal problems is a good way to infest the whole neighborhood with burdock. Being kind is a good plant, but if it comes in a form that encourages an abuser to continue to be abusive, I am harming not only myself, but the other.

Is this a good plant I am growing for wrong reasons? Grapes, for instance, can become raisins—or wine. What do I gain by keeping the abuser in my life? Is this someone I can really afford to keep in my life? If someone is funny, charming, intelligent, and I feel sorry for her, is that sufficient reason to feed and house a compulsive gambler? Is taking care of someone who is not taking care of himself (by keeping a roof over his head and food on his table) a really sound investment of my time, energy, and resources?

What is it I really want? I want to matter to someone else. But do I matter to this person because I am his gravy train? Is that really all I have to offer someone else? Is this person capable of seeing me as anything but his gravy train?

How do I move from an addictive response to life to a healthier way of living?

How do I move from an internal weedpatch to a productive garden? Start weeding. Now. Today. Some principles of weeding:

Set priorities. Priorities are somewhat situational. Which weed is going to go to seed today? I have a constant battle with bindweed—but today the garlic mustard is blooming. I must drop everything and pull up that colony of garlic mustard before it seeds itself. Hallucination happens because I am anxious about my friend's self-destructive choices; it makes me feel too much like a helpless kid all over again. I need to notice the anxiety and deal directly with it.

Perfection is not the goal. Perfection is a form of all-or-nothing thinking: either I weed this garden perfectly, or it's not worth even trying. My job as internal gardener is to work to be better, not perfect. Leave the campsite better than I found it: Jesus did not tell us we should trample around in the wheat to pull up the tares the day before the harvest; he will deal with the tares at harvest. What Jesus really wants of me is that I control the most invasive weeds, not all the weeds.

Be persistent. Work on the weed that is going to seed, not just today, but tomorrow and the next day, and the day after.

Learn from mistakes. There is a plant I call Pink-Stemmed Weed, which grows four feet tall and casts its seeds over several square yards. When the beets, which also have a pink stem, and Pink-Stemmed Weed are intermingled and two inches tall, it is bound to happen: I will pull up a beet, or I will miss a Pink-Stemmed Weed. I just try to notice and learn what I can. Try to do it better next time.

Do not beat myself up when I make a mistake. Instead, put my energy and focus into learning what I can and doing it better next time.

Notice the joy. Not the joy of a perfectly weeded life, but the joy that comes from simply choosing to be better, and persisting in that choice until the harvest.

A Vision for the ILYM Campus

Ashlee Miller-Berry

I was completely awed by the plans and visions that were shared at the January 2012 Site Envisioning meeting on the ILYM campus in McNabb. The ILYM campus is such a big part of me as a person but most especially as a Quaker. I have been going there for as long as I can remember and it has always been a joy for me, even when it was sweltering hot and ungodly humid (yes, pun intended). It has been the place where I have discovered what Quakerism means to me as well as my spiritual home.

It has also been the place that fosters Quaker relationships and continues to foster those relationships. As a child I met wonderful people, both peers and those of diverse ages, with whom I have always been able to maintain and have thriving relationships because of the yearly meeting site. Every year I went go to annual sessions, I would make new friends, but also be able to catch up with long-time friends. I do not think that this would have been possible if these relationships had not been born from my time on the ILYM campus. My friends and I may not have seen each other for a whole year, but in only four days time we had renewed our relationship while also fostering a sense of maintenance for the future.

With all of those thoughts and feelings aside, the picture that formed for me through this meeting was one of awe for the visions of the future. I had always imagined my family and me attending ILYM annual sessions together in the future, but with little sense of what the campus might look like. I wanted my children to have similar experiences to mine where they were able to pick up relationships and feel as though this place could be the roots of their religious home.

I have always had a concern that my children might not be able to have these experiences because our buildings could not be sustained in a more modern world. My heart and mind was quite settled that this would probably not be the case. I am so proud and delighted that people are thinking of the future, whether they are going to be here or not. I am thankful for all of the hard work that people have provided this community, my spiritual community, for the maintenance of this space. I am so humbled by the forethought and anticipation of wanting to further this wonderful place.

With the plans that we currently have, we can make sure that what we build and plant will be done in a way that is consistent with our vision and give guidance to those who follow us. I am so glad that people are putting things on paper and making very definite plans about what might be needed in the future. The plans that have been drawn can be seen in my mind as something that could possibly come to fruition in the future. I can see the new dining hall and the prairie. I can see the gardens and quiet sleeping spaces. I can see this space reach its full potential as a spiritual haven, not only as it has become for me, but also for newcomers and people returning from a long absence. I see these plans and it makes my heart lighter to see so many improvements on such a perfect place. And most importantly I can see myself and even my family coming to this wonderful place, that has become such a part of who I am, for some many more years to come. As a person who is always planning and looking towards the future, this is something that is very important to me.

Writing to Attend to the Spirit

Joan Pine, Evanston Meeting

Writing has been a central activity of my five-member spiritual nurture group for several years. We began with the suggestions provided in *Group Spiritual Nurture: The Wisdom of Spiritual Listening* by Daphne Clement (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #373). After each member of the circle "checks in," describing what has happened in his or her life since the last meeting and sharing spiritual concerns and joys, we worship silently together for about twenty minutes. Whoever hosts the meeting serves as facilitator and time-keeper.

Then the facilitator introduces a single topic, such as: "A time when all I could do was wait," "a time when God was real to me," "a time I experienced the darkness," "a time I felt hope despite the evidence." We are asked to write individually for 30-40 minutes about the assigned topic. When all have finished, each of us then shares the content of our writing, either by reading or by summarizing it in our own words, in the format of worship sharing. Such topics discourage the temptation to intellectualize and invite us instead to consider how the Divine may have been moving in our lives.

The process of writing, in particular, centers our sharing at a deeper level than the rambling that easily can occur when participants attempt to recall events and emotions orally. For instance, one member of our group sometimes creates poetry. And while writing about the first incident that comes to mind, I often find that a stronger one surfaces, and it (or the gut-level connection) may become the substance of my writing. I believe that the thoughtful process that this writing entails encourages each member of our group to listen intently to what the others have shared. It has helped us to "know one another in that which is eternal" as well as to grow our individual awarenesses of the Holy.



Dancing on the lawn, ILYM 2012

Pathways toward Peace

Hal Mead, Evanston Friends

Over the last ten years—and especially the last four years—I have been troubled by all the shouting and blaming that many seem to feel necessary to get our attention. This has created a lot of noise and very little clarity. Much of this is based on fear. Some of the fears are based on labels that we toss around at each other. The labels are a source of misunderstanding. No matter how hard we shout we don't seem to be able to connect.

Yes, there are real problems that will not go away that need our attention. These will require that we be able to sit down with each other beyond the sides we have drawn. We now live in a new world that will require new ways to look at our problems, at each other, and how to deal with the unique situations we now find ourselves in.

The arguments we have are related to not being able to see that this is a new world we are all going to have to live in together. Working this out will take an awareness of the suffering and pain, old ways that will not work, and seeing beyond winning and losing of an old world that is not there any more. There is a new world to create to deal with many of our problems if we can get out of the trenches of our old thoughts and look for new pathways.

Here is a series of poems I have written (three within 2011). As I have looked them over I have noticed that they fit together to give expression toward a new world that is possible. Yes, there are many sharp edges and jagged parts that seem impossible to deal with. When we are able to raise our awareness just a little new possibilities and pathways can emerge.

Occupied?!
12-11
Are you occupied
What occupies you
Are you from more
Than just a few
Is it the bottom line
Or just your spine
To stand up
And cry and try
One more time
Can you feel the pain
Without hope of gain
Is your anger real
Are you overwhelmed too much
And getting out of touch
Will your voice be heard
or being dismissed - absurd
Yes - the anger is real
Your voices speak
Even with many so weak
Voices not always clear
Except for anger and fear
What direction to take
Lest there be no mistake
This movement isn't fake
Time will decide
The direction to go
So all can know
There is much work to do
Injustice to see
The old ways are over
This is not yours or mine
There are new paths to find
To set us free
A justice to know
And a balance to bare
We are all part of earth's flow
And all ours to care

work to do - no jobs?!
12-11
I hear the demands, the screams
More jobs, more job, more jobs

The hurt is real
All those words and feelings
Seem to have no effect
As far as the eye can see
Only long lines
Unemployed and homeless
Without hope
As I look around in spite of no jobs
There is plenty of work to do
Taking better care of ourselves
As well as our earth too
What is going on?
Who defines what jobs there are
Business and government do
But many limits show
There is just no demand
We just can't afford it now
It costs too much
We can't go into more debt
We can't do that - No -No -No
A lot of shouting, and shaming
If only this - if only that
Creating much noise
Full of much blaming
Wait a minute -
There is work to do
Let us start with just a few
Beginning to hear
Beyond the fear
The word is out -
Without a shout
Just whispers first
Then with ease
From a small breeze
Hey - look around
In all the small places
Answers being found
We all can play our part
To ease the pain
Only a few to gain?
No
This work is for all
When we fully hear the call
There is an abundance
To know out there
For all to share
Could anyone guess
This could be of a world
Of - Yes - Yes - Yes

Rapids of Change

We are living through rapids of change
Strong emotions, feelings, conflicts - stir us up
Loud voices yell
We must do this,
We must do that
I am right, you are wrong -
Go this way - No go that way
Draw those lines sharp and
Don't ever cross them
Anger, fear, loud voices -
create noise - then more noise
- no one is heard
The times demand we must move and choose
- or else
Climate change, Monetary crisis,
Health care, Immigration, Terrorism
All demand our attention -
Overload
Big government, big business, big banks
Who is there to trust?
Our old home is gone

Find a quiet space to listen -
listen without judgment -
beyond the noise
Beyond the good and bad -
Beyond those lines drawn
Beyond the fear
In spite of all the yelling -
we are all connected
We are going through
rapids of change
Rapids demand attention and action
Rapids require riding together
A symphony awaits expression
All voices to be heard, respected
Fear, anger, and suffering
To be known and shared
Meet, see, and know each other

Go thru and deal with the rapids
Plant the seeds of change
A new world sprouts -
Roots hold together
A new home
A new life
PEACE

Peace
2011 - 2012
Peace requires
We step beyond lines
So carefully drawn,
Protected, guarded, we hang on
Peace requires careful preparation
Connections perceived allow new roots to grow
Inside who we are and outside what we know
Listen quietly beyond the noise
New life heals old wounds all around
Our hurts felt deeply
Pain fully found
Hate and Fear
Find no place here
No need getting up tight
Nor either to fight
We all have our lives to free
As well as our peace to know
Aware of this we can all flow
Life lived peacefully
That we may all care
Creates an abundance
Of life patterns to share
Peace brings Justice
A balance to feel
Once impossible
Now very real
Peace introduces us
Exposing great mystery
Well beyond our full knowing
Still without effort we can know
Resting in the love of this great show

Monthly Meeting Reports

Evanston Monthly Meeting
Nancy Halliday

Evanston Monthly Meeting held a successful Quaker Quest with sessions on February 11, 18, 25 and March 3, repeated on March 11, 18, 25 and April 1. Attendance was modest but the testimonies were revelations of Quaker witness in the world today and were deeply appreciated by all who heard them. We presented our Peace Award to Ron Miller and the organization he co-founded, Common Ground, on January 22. Jim Kenney accepted the award for Ron Miller who died suddenly last year. Audrey French was our appointed Vision Keeper at the Interfaith Action of Evanston dinner on February 19. Several members of the meeting attended.

The Ministry and Counsel Committee requested Beth Burbank to help us improve our skills in pastoral care. She presented three sessions: on pastoral care February 5, on grief March 11, and on advance directives April 1. We are most grateful for her counsel.

The Alexander famnily—Caleb, Martha, Owen and Oliver—left for employment on the east coast. We wish them success. Mike Conover transferred his membership from 57th Street Meeting, and Martha Turner transferred hers from South Bend. We welcomed Rex Nyquist as a member, but lost Joyce Schladweiler who withdrew.

Our Peace, Social Concerns and Earth Care Committee gave much consideration to the request from FCNL for priorities for the 113th Congress. Two members of that committee visited both senators' offices in Chicago recently in regard to military spending. We continue our active involvement with the Night Ministry. On April 29, an intergenerational group made

sandwiches in the meetinghouse kitchen for distribution to the homeless. Our silent retreat was scheduled at the Cabrini Center in Des Plaines on September 21-23.

The memorial meeting for Royal Buscombe was held on June 9. At her executor's request, her and her husband Bill's ashes will be interred in our yard. We are setting up a committee to develop a protocol for future requests to accept cremated remains for interment on our grounds.

South Bend Friends Start a Worship Group in Elkhart/Goshen

Monica Maria Tetzlaff

What happens when a Monthly Meeting follows a leading to reach out and start a worship group in a nearby area? This report from South Bend Friends will focus on South Bend's process of starting a worship group in the Elkhart and Goshen area east of South Bend. Other meetings may be thinking about such outreach and this reflection on our brief experience is offered as a sharing of our labor with the workings of the Spirit and its fruits so far.

Although most South Bend Friends live in the city of South Bend or its adjoining city, Mishawaka, we have long had attenders and members from suburban and rural areas and towns, including the small cities of Elkhart and Goshen, which are about 15 and 30 miles away, respectively. A number of South Bend Friends shared a concern for some time that some Friends from Elkhart and Goshen attended infrequently or drifted away because of the difficulty of the distance between them and our meeting space. A meeting for worship in Elkhart was occasionally discussed.

What happened next, was that one member brought forward a leading to start a worship group in Elkhart in a Meeting for Business and other Friends responded. One Friend had experience in starting two meetings, and still other Friends had ties to and knowledge of the communities in Elkhart and Goshen. There is a sizeable peace church community of Mennonites in both of these small cities, and it seemed that a Quaker worship group would be welcome, particularly because of the interest of students and faculty at Goshen College, a Mennonite institution.

By the spring of 2012, South Bend Friends felt a unity to start an Elkhart worship group, in part because clearness committees for membership had been formed for two attenders from the Elkhart area, one of whom was often bicycling this distance. There was no expectation of what the outcome would be. When Illinois Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee was notified about this new worship group, there was interest among the members of that committee and a member participated in the first meeting, which took place in April. Other members of South Bend Friends plan to attend, as they are able, to provide a supportive presence.

The first meeting of the worship group was a Meeting for Worship with attention to discussing some details of the logistics of where, when and how a Meeting would take place in the weeks following. A number of the attenders maintain commitments to Sunday morning services of other faith traditions and so the group opted for a while to meet Sunday evenings, followed by a light potluck. The group decided to alternate between meeting in Elkhart and Goshen because an equal number of attenders are from each location for the time being. We will continue this experiment as way opens.

To Be Known "Experimentally"

Judy Erickson, Oak Park Friends Meeting

George Fox and the early Quakers learned what they knew "experimentally." During this past year the Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting (MCGM) went through a visioning process that led to some "experimental" decisions at the February meeting. This process resulted in setting up a two-year experiment to focus on Quaker fellowship that would be called Chicagoland Friends Gathering (CFG). Inspired by and including (as Way opens) the annual Upper Fox Valley Corn Roast, a structure was approved to plan several programs throughout the year that would offer opportunities for fellowship and to strengthen/deepen our spiritual connections across monthly and yearly meetings. A Steering Committee, composed of Bonni McKeown, Margaret Nelson, and Judy Wolicki, was set up to plan programs. Please contact one of them if you are interested in attending the meetings of this committee; all are welcome.

CFG is also experimenting with having just one meeting for worship with concern for business per year, instead of three. Pam Wolfe will serve as Clerk and Diane Saper will serve as Recording Clerk for this two-year period. Helen Dickinson has agreed to continue as Treasurer for the next two years. Near the end of this two-year period a survey will be done to assess how it has gone. Because there will not be enough time at business meetings for Monthly Meeting States of Society, Monthly Meetings are being asked to send their State of Society reports for the next two years directly to their quarterly/area or yearly meetings.

The first program of CFG was held on May 5 at Chicago Monthly Meeting (Western Yearly Meeting), and included a "Bughouse Corner" discussion entitled “Quakers Called To Prophesy: What does that mean today?" and a banner creation workshop lead by Margaret Nelson. I would estimate that hundreds of photos were taken at the Chicago counter-NATO protests (held May 18-20) of her banner about the right to peaceful assembly and my banner, which she helped me make, promoting the practice of peace. Our messages live on in these photos taken by journalists and interested people from all over the country.

Everyone is enthusiastically invited to attend CFG meetings, which may not be held according to the previous MCGM schedule but which will be announced well in advance.

Does Chicago Need Another Private School?

Sophie de la Mar, Northside Friends Meeting

There are some who argue that Quakers should put their energies into the improvement of public schools in Chicago rather than develop yet another private school. Are not there already enough private schools in Chicago? Are not private schools by their very nature elite?

I would never discourage anyone from working to improve the public schools. However, each and every child deserves a good education and the only way for this to happen is for every child and his/her family to have access to a choice of schools. What is a good education? I believe that it is one which helps each child find and develop his/her unique talents and gifts and which starts them on lifelong learning. Children are individuals as are their needs. Some children can get a good education in large classrooms with a traditional approach. Others, though, need more individualized attention and/or a more creative or nontraditional approach.

While it is true that there are a number of private schools in Chicago, it is also true that the tuition for most of them is quite high ($20,000 to $28,000). Tuition is more moderate ($8,000 to $10,000) at most religious schools. Even these can be quite expensive; for example, Sacred Heart Academy is $17,000 per year and St. Ignatius is $14,300 per year. Religious education is a part of the curriculum at these schools. Those children who opt out of religion classes risk the stigma of "being different." Class sizes can be large in these schools and the educational approach is often traditional.

Chicago Friends School (CFS) offers the modest tuition rate ($9,500) of area religious schools but does not expect participation in religion doctrinal classes. Instead, CFS offers a curriculum based on Quaker values, values that are central to Quaker faith and practice but are also embraced by many other like-minded faith groups.

Chicago Friends School offers a quality education for this modest tuition. Project-based, inquiry learning, small class sizes, a student:teacher ratio of 10:1, a commitment to the environment and to the arts, outdoor recess, and a school garden comprise just some of what is offered. CFS is unique and just what some families are looking for in a school for their children.

Because CFS is committed to creating a diverse student body, in socioeconomic status as well as in other dimensions, financial support is provided to families who would otherwise be unable to send their children to the school. Besides the tuition assistance available to all for up to half of the annual tuition, CFS has just established the Patricia Moles Scholarship Fund to help those who cannot afford the remainder (Please see the accompanying article on Patricia Moles). CFS wants its doors open to all of Chicago's children.

Does Chicago need another private school? My answer is a resounding "Yes!" Chicago's children and their families deserve choices so that each child can be matched with the very best learning environment for him or her.

Patricia Moles: Lifelong Quaker Activist and Advocate for Social Justice

Sophie de la Mar, Northside Friends Meeting

Who is Patricia Moles? Why is Chicago Friends School naming their scholarship fund after her? Patricia Moles was an activist and advocate for social justice. Raised in New Jersey and Connecticut, Moles experienced both the privations of poverty and the prejudices of an exclusive community. College experiences taught her still more about prejudice. Moles took advantage of multiple opportunities in her lifetime to fight prejudice and advance the embrace of diversity.

Patricia Fleigh Moles was born in 1934 in Paterson, New Jersey, during the Great Depression. Her father's work as a radio repairman was not steady and the family lived in several poor quarters. To save money they decided to rent a summer cottage near Paterson shortly after Pat was born. They lived in this cottage on Preakness Mountain for almost six years. A stove was their only source of heat. Water came from a spring some distance away, and the cottage had no electricity. After a time her father made a generator from scrap parts and they had electric lights. They were so far from neighbors below that when a fire broke out nearby some said to let it burn because nobody lived on the hill.



With the preparations for World War II, Pat's father found steady work and the family settled in Darien, Connecticut. Her mother chose the town for its good schools, and they found a nice house on the edge of Darien where Pat lived until college. While Darien did indeed have good schools, this town is where Pat first experienced discrimination against non-whites and non-Christians. When graduation came in 1952, Pat was ready to leave Darien.

Pat's older sister attended Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio, and Pat chose to attend this school as well, forgoing her interest and talent in music to major in sociology and religion. She joined a sorority as most co-eds did at the time. As sorority chaplain in her junior year, she was preparing for fall rush activities when she came across unpublished discriminatory bylaws. She at first thought they were obsolete. When she was told they were still very much in force, she resigned from the sorority. Pat then joined other co-eds in a social club called Cosmodelphia which had no bars to membership. Pat became interested in Quakers during her college years and also met her future husband, Oliver Moles, there.

Following graduation, Pat worked directing youth activities for a downtown Congregational Church in Columbus, Ohio. At the same time Ollie began graduate school at the University of Michigan in a social psychology program. The following summer in 1957 they were married, and Pat moved to Ann Arbor. She found work as a psychiatric social worker at the nearby Ypsilanti State Hospital handling the mental problems of nearby residents. She continued that work until daughter Elizabeth

(Betsy) was born in 1959.

Pat and Ollie attended the Ann Arbor Friends Meeting. In 1960, Pat was approached to work with the high school students in their Meeting, and she readily accepted. Son Stephen was born in 1963. With graduate training and two years on a Detroit school research project finished, Ollie took a research job in 1964 with the federal Health, Education and Welfare Department, and the family moved to Falls Church, Virginia. The civil rights era was an exciting time to be in Washington, D.C., and Pat and Ollie were happy to be part of this movement.

Ollie managed evaluations of federal anti-poverty programs and later managed research projects in the U.S. Department of Education. He worked especially on the involvement of disadvantaged parents in their children's education and student discipline issues. The family joined Langley Hill Friends Meeting in McLean, Virginia.

Pat applied her skills and interests to a new hospitality center on Capitol Hill, William Penn House, where she organized seminars for high school and college student groups around international affairs and public policy. In the early 1970s, Pat volunteered at the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), a Quaker lobby that advocates for just and peaceful solutions to foreign and domestic problems. She became a research assistant to the FCNL lobbyist on foreign affairs, Frances Neely, as she prepared to discuss foreign policy issues with members of Congress.

At the same time, Pat was a member of the executive board of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Friends Service Committee. She became the board specialist on program evaluation at a time when evaluation was a contentious issue.

From the mid-70s on, Pat also worked for the Montgomery County (Md.) Public Schools in their appraisal and assessment department. She applied her program evaluation skills to develop surveys on educational issues, and in particular a new system called mutual and reciprocal evaluation. At about the same time, she also became active in the Wheaton, Md., chapter of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs. She became its president in 1980.

For her last few years Pat was a trustee of Sandy Spring Friends School. She was an active member of the board's diversity committee, which considered how students of all backgrounds and orientations were treated on the campus. Her two children had attended Sandy Spring in their high school days.

In early 2010, Pat was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. She continued her work with Sandy Spring and personal activities, but her energy level began to sag. Pat took comfort in the words of early Quakers, including this one from George Fox: "There is no time but the present time…." Her muscles steadily weakened, and she passed away on July 23, 2011.

Pat's husband, Ollie, has contributed money to Chicago Friends School to establish the Patricia Moles Scholarship Fund in memory of his wife and her life's work.

My View from Firbank Fell

Maurine Pyle, Southern Illinois Friends Meeting

While on a private pilgrimage to northwest England several years ago, I was moved to climb Firbank Fell, the hill where the great spiritual movement of Quakerism began. The historical marker said that in 1652 one thousand people had gathered there to hear a sermon by George Fox, a young itinerant preacher. I wondered, as I looked around, why so many people had climbed the steep hill to hear him? Later I discovered that they had come to the market fair at Sedburgh, a nearby village, looking for work at the hiring fair. When they heard that Fox would be preaching on the following day at a church at Firbank Fell, they climbed the hill to hear him.

The stone church proved too small to handle the great crowd. George Fox spoke from a huge rock outcropping, now called Fox's Pulpit, while his listeners gathered below inside a natural amphitheater. Historical reflections from that day tell us that he preached a Gospel sermon of such power that the people were electrified. When they heard his vital message that "Christ has come to teach his people himself," some became aware of their own spiritual gifts. On that day a portion of them was "gathered as in a net." They experienced a change of direction, becoming part of a renewed apostolic ministry, and followers of George Fox.

As I stood on Fox's Pulpit, my eyes traveled westward over the endless Yorkshire hills until I could see, in my mind's eye, a tall white meetinghouse shining in the distance. I was seeing our yearly meeting gathering place on Quaker Lane on the Illinois prairie. Suddenly I understood that we 21st century Friends are the direct heirs of the original vision of the early Friends of England. When Fox saw "a great people to be gathered," he was speaking about us.

At Firbank Fell a brave group of men and women became valiant traveling ministers, who, upon hearing the Gospel message, took off to share it in distant places in the world. We know that a powerful religious movement was born on that day, carrying those ordinary people to places they never intended to go. If we 21st century American Friends are the remnant of this great wave of Christian faith, how are we fulfilling the founding vision of George Fox? What is the meaning of our Quaker faith today?

In America today our sense of spiritual fellowship in Liberal meetings, the feeling of belonging to the same tribe, is diminishing. We no longer live in the same communities, and we come from diverse faith traditions. Our cultural values are no longer entwined at the roots, as were those of our founders. As a body we share less genetic and cultural memory of what it means to be Quakers. Different viewpoints often prevent us from looking in the same direction to find a point of convergence. We hold beliefs ranging from Buddhism to non-theism to Christianity, or we may simply be ethical humanists. Just imagine a mixture of wild seeds cast into a single plot of land, producing a profusion of color. A wide variety of plants all blooming together symbolize our present condition in the Religious Society of Friends. Discerning which is a wildflower and which is a weed is not easy. We are living a great experiment of religious diversity.

> What do we have in common now?

What do we have in common now? Unprogrammed Friends often share a mystical way of knowing and a deep love of silence. They uphold the testimonies of simplicity, peace, equality, integrity and community by honoring them with their lives. These Quaker values attracted many seekers to Quaker meetings,

keeping them connected to the traditions of Quakerism. Yet it is also true that 21st century Quaker meetings have become more like independent churches. Some do not have any direct contact with neighboring meetings, resulting in isolation and stagnation. A small percentage of the members may participate in wider Quaker groups, leaving the majority at home without any direct connection.

As I have traveled across the United States, I have discovered discontent and troubled silence in many meetings. Spiritual hunger has led people to join Friends meetings seeking after spiritual depth. Sometimes that hunger leads them away again when they do not find it. Newcomers may find that we cannot explain our core beliefs or that we tend to suppress discussion of our religious principles for fear of arousing conflict. People who have a limited understanding of basic Quaker traditions have replaced the solid Quaker elders whom I encountered when I first attended a Quaker meeting. Who is helping to shape the contours of our life as Friends today?

I hear fewer people any longer referring to the founding vision of Quakers and the core Christian beliefs upon which our life is grounded. Quakers of old were not intolerant of differing points of view, but they had their own place to stand. Jesus' message was interpreted by Friends to be universal and inclusive based on the message "Love one another." Early Friends were a community of people who shared the same set of Christian beliefs and practices. These communal values have been largely lost in our era. Now we have a diverse set of patterns.

Today the chief characteristic of many liberal meetings is intellectual independence. For some newcomers, a Quaker meeting may appear to be a place to meet people who share their particular political viewpoint. In recent years the search for a common faith practice has often been replaced by an unspoken doctrine of individualism. Rather than being willing to labor to find common ground, differences are often suppressed in order to keep an uneasy peace. When an important issue arises, the hidden differences are often revealed, resulting in open conflict.

One example of a commonly suppressed conflict, which I have witnessed in many meetings, is between wounded people who have left fundamentalist Christian churches and Liberal Christian Friends. The former Christians are sometimes troubled by hearing Christ-centered messages offered in the meeting for worship, and their temperamental reactions cause the Christians to be silent. When there is no open discussion of these theological differences, conflicts become an underground fire, quietly burning until triggered by an event or person.

When these eruptions occur within a monthly meeting, it is time to call for a midwife. The spiritual midwife is someone invited into the community who can serve as a guide, coach, or healer. The role of the midwife is to initiate the laboring process and then to leave the remaining work to be completed by the community. Laboring is an old Quaker term that has fallen into disuse. In the spiritual sense, laboring refers to the willingness to work face-to-face to solve a problem with the understanding that God will find an opening. This process is only one part persuasion; it is equally listening to one another's differences and allowing the Spirit to open a new direction until the Truth emerges.

As Friends we are being called to seek "the third way." I believe now is the time to start by inviting the midwives to enter into labor with us. We are called to find another pathway than one of avoidance or suppression. Are we willing to be healed?

Reflections on Electricity in the Cabins: The Larger Issue

Roy Treadway, Bloomington-Normal Friends Meeting

At this year's sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting, the meeting was not able to come to unity about whether to put electricity in even one or two of the cabins to allow persons to use them for medical devices, such as CPAPs, or for night lights for children. To add electricity to the cabins, some Friends felt, would allow further encroachment of electricity, already used in the high-school bunkhouse and the shower house, across the campground; additionally, it would bring with it, however small, more light and noise, and even encourage more use of electricity in our lives. These differences over putting electricity in our cabins reflect, I sense, differences in the kinds of needs and desires for our accommodations at ILYM and also in our expectations for our sleeping arrangements, which have changed over time.

Certainly ILYM needs to provide access to electricity for medical equipment, especially CPAPs, whose use in the general population has increased considerably. Putting electricity in cabins, however, is really just one aspect of a larger issue. How are we are meeting the needs of everyone who stays overnight at ILYM, including:

- older people who find tenting more and more difficult, and who are now using off-campus motels,
- teens and youth who prefer to stay up late,
- children who are used to sleeping with a night light,
- persons who need special accommodations and access, as well as
- persons using medical equipment?

Our needs are broad and not solved by one simple change.

Clear Creek House provides a place for persons using CPAPs, but is not a solution for all our needs. We are providing accessibility to the first floor of Clear Creek House, but not the second floor. Air conditioning is nice, but costly in many ways, and has disadvantages when windows cannot be opened. Since a sink, shower, and toilet are combined in each bathroom, having just two bathrooms limits access at busy times. Clear Creek House, nevertheless, is a valuable resource with a limited number of beds that usefully addresses some of our needs.

Perhaps the time has come for us to consider developing the Quiet Camp Ground more quickly than we had planned in order to provide a relatively quiet and dark place to sleep. We would need to provide toilets, sinks, and showers (like the campground shower house) and turn off both of the very bright security lights while people are camping there. Those who want a quiet, low-resource place to sleep would now have one. All of this, of course, would cost money.

By developing the Quiet Camp Ground, we could allow the cabins to have electricity for medical devices as well as lights. Our expectation for quiet after 10:00 p.m. would remain unchanged, and the use of lights would still have to be restricted because of others sleeping in the cabins. We would not have to write a carefully worded minute to describe how electricity could or could not be used in the cabins.

How people were accommodated at ILYM has changed many times over the century-plus period during which Friends have been coming to our historic site. Local Friends no longer put up Friends from elsewhere, and the dormitory is gone. We need to think broadly about how to meet the needs of all Friends as much as possible in an environmentally responsible way. Let us seek comprehensive and long-term solutions to the problems we sense before us.

Silent Worship

Jacque Pepper, Columbia Friends Meeting

The coffee is b-poppling
but then it stops,
and the room for worship
becomes silent.

Friends clear their throats
or cough or sigh;
and pews creak from weight
being shifted.

I look around at faces,
calm and peaceful.
Some eyes are closed,
looking inward.

Some hands are clasped
in humble prayer;
some hands are open,
inviting the Spirit.

Closing my eyes, I sense
an expanding stillness,
the spacious moment
growing slower.

I am aware of my thoughts;
but they're floating away.
My mind is working on
making connections.

In the stillness we seek
God's guidance and will;
we hear each other,
sharing ministries.

When the hour has passed,
Friends rise and meet
with the touch of hands,
greeting one another.

I think to myself:
what a blessing it is;
and it feels so right,
this worshiping in silence.



Square dancing, ILYM 2012

The Ocean of Light

David Finke, Columbia Friends Meeting

When Quakers speak ONLY of "the Light within"—as though it were individual virtue—and ignore what George Fox rightly termed the existential "Ocean of Darkness," we are rightly accused of naiveté and sentimentalism. There is SOMEthing that the "Ocean of Light" needs to overcome, and that was the powerful testimony from Fox's transformed life.

I find a Biblical basis (which informed early Friends) to be profoundly helpful in understanding "The Light." Read the prologue of the Gospel of John, sometimes called "The Quaker Gospel," to see how Jesus' entering our world as the fulfillment of messianic expectation is identified with a Principle of Creation that has been there all along—the Logos emanating from the Divine, engaging the world, available to us. Jesus—as Christ, as Logos, as one with The Creator—becomes Light and Life, entering and transforming our hearts and souls and social relationships, and, we hope, society at large.

For me, "Light" is a most fundamental and informative metaphor. All life depends on the light coming from the sun, from which we need constant renewal. If the sun suddenly were obliterated, nine minutes later we would grind to a halt. Similarly, we are moment by moment dependent on God's Presence and Grace. We are drawn to the Light; our souls are phototropic.

The Light—in both physical and spiritual senses—simultaneously reveals (pointing out those dark places we'd rather keep hidden and private, living only unto our selves) AND it heals and empowers. Just as we use the ultraviolet part of the spectrum to kill bacteria, just as we need sunshine to create essential vitamins, we need and draw on God's Presence entering into (and challenging) our imperfect lives. This is the "perfect Love which casts out all Fear."

So, I find in the figure of The Light what some call the Overcoming Power (a meaning of that earlier phrase of "walking OVER the earth") —to transcend that which would encumber us, pull us down, leave us stewing in that which is less than God would have us to be.

Light also is associated with a sense of glory and radiance—and an immediate encounter with God can indeed be blinding, not to be gazed at directly. The ancients (viz., Moses) understood that, and Paul was actually disabled for a while when the Living Christ confronted who he had become and what he was doing. So it is with light: powerful stuff!

A single candle, Jesus reminded us, set in a room fills the entire space, "and the darkness has not overcome it." No light of witness to truth, love, mercy is insignificant. These embodiments of God's work and will do make a difference, even though darkness itself (whether in our psyches or our institutions) has not yet been conquered. Mercifully, we are given the "measure of Light" which fits our lives, is appropriate to our needs, and doesn't destroy us. It is that measure which we are invited to live up to.

We are advised by Our Teacher to "let our light so shine that people can see our good works and glorify [its Source.]" Light is given us not just for inward enlightenment as though we are solitary in the world and live unto ourselves. Rather, Jesus' image of God's Reign is one in which the barriers are broken, justice is established, the old is flushed away, "all things are made new," the dead places in our lives are transformed and we experience resurrection in the here-and-now, and we find our common brother/sisterhood in the Family of God.

Let us then move forward, together, with God's Light showing the way, guiding us in paths of righteousness, as the Good Shepherd promises.