Among Friends

Winter 2011



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Editor's Note

The life of a Friends involves expressing one's faith. What has come to be know as the testimonies of Friends are topical groupings of how one's faith is expressed in day to day life. In addition to the "doing" of outward actions, inward reflection also plays a role in the day to day life of Friends. This issue contains an offering that shares both inward reflections and outward expressions.

Wil Brant

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 reminided 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

All submissions should be sent to the editor. Deadline date for next issue is posted on ILYM website.

Informal articles about your meeting or worship group (not State of Society Reports), plus poetry, artwork, and photos are encouraged and received with appreciation.

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Eldering: A Legacy

Mariellen Gilpin, Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting



When I arrived in Champaign, Illinois, in 1963,
I made my way to the Friends Meeting that very first Sunday.
What was I looking for?
I wanted to follow a spiritual path.
I had a calling to the ministry,
And at the time, Quakers were unique
In encouraging women in spiritual leadership.
I also wanted silent worship:
I wanted to be clear who was responsible if worship wasn't helpful—
I didn't want to ever again return home after worship saying,
"It wasn't a good worship this morning—
The minister didn't do a good job."
I wanted to know that if it hadn't been a good experience,
I was the one who was responsible.
And, I was new in the community.
One went to church to meet people.
I got so much more.

I found a spiritual home; a spiritual community.
I found a people committed to working things out
When they disagreed,
Committed to finding the best way forward in any corporate decision.
I found elders— Quakers who helped me find my way spiritually.
There was Rachel Weller,
Who was the first person to talk to me about practicing the presence of God;
About praying without ceasing;
About all of us having a piece of the truth,
And if we found a way to unite all our little pieces of the truth,
We probably had found what God wanted us to do about whatever we were facing.

I had not yet spoken in worship.
I wondered sometimes if I should speak,
But I wasn't sure whether it was God who wanted me to speak,
Or if it was just me wanting to hear the sound of my own voice.
And so there was James Ayars,
Who came up to me before worship one Sunday and said,
"Ministry and Oversight Committee has been talking,
and we think you should be speaking in worship."
I told him my concern.
He said, "You just go ahead and speak.

If you're not moved by the Spirit, we'll be sure and tell you."
It was still several months before I began to share during worship,
And to this day I don't know what Ministry and Oversight saw
That made them decide to encourage me to speak.
Another of those early elders was Gardiner Stillwell.
He actually came a few years after I did.
He had read "Friends, Society of" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
And decided he wanted to see what it was like
When someone spoke because God gave them a message.
I was the first Quaker minister he experienced.
He was so excited when I stood:
It was actually happening!
God had moved someone to speak!
He often mentioned that I was the first person he heard speak in meeting.
Gardiner had a prodigious memory.
He often told me things I'd said 20 years earlier.
I always tried to look as if I knew what he was talking about!
One day curiosity overcame me, and I said to him,
"What was it I said that first time you heard me speak in Meeting?"
He said, "I don't really remember what you said.
I remember how it made me feel: that God had spoken to me through you."

All of these elders had one quality in common,
And that was the quality of humility.
They were all 30 and 40 years older than me,
Much more spiritually experienced than me.
All three had a lot more social standing than I,
A mere graduate student.
But they all treated me like a spiritual contemporary.
They asked me my thoughts about spiritual matters
Quite as if they really wanted to know.

Then, in midlife, I lost my sanity.
I had been taught in early childhood not to speak of the elephant in the living room.
Quaker worship had taught me to speak my truth,
But that was before I had my very own, very big elephant –
the diagnosis of mental illness.
Before I went to worship that next time,
I thought hard.
Do I tell Friends the truth? Or not?
Friends were my family.
But family was where I'd learned not to speak of elephants.





I thought to myself,
"I'm sure they all know I'm sick.
I can make it harder for all of us—
They'll have to pretend they don't know,
And I'll have to try to remember what excuse I gave to whom when.
It'll be harder for them to help me
If they have to pretend they don't know.
Life is too short to spend it lying."
And so, whenever I spoke in worship,
I explained about the illness before I told my story
About the ways God was helping me heal.
Old Friends and new Friends,
Younger and more mature Friends,
Often told me my sharing had helped them
With the ghosties and ghoulies in their inner lives.

Those elders carried me—
Carried me for twenty years.
I didn't go to business meetings in those years,
But I was faithful in worship.
That's what they said to me:
"You are faithful in worship."
Those dear elders encouraged me—
They said my ministry nourished their spirits.
One Friend made sure I always had a ride home after worship.
When she began experiencing awful memories
And realized her father had sexually molested her and her sister,
And she had been complicit in his molestations of her daughters,
It was in those car rides home from worship
That she shared her anger and her pain.
All I did was listen—
Listen and give her hugs.
What goes round comes round.

So, in 1998, I had a spiritual experience:
I needed to attend business meetings again.
That first business meeting was one of those four-hour marathons.
My husband teased me:
"Your problem was that you went back to business meeting cold turkey.
You should have attended at least four committee meetings
Before attending your first business meeting!"
I began working on the meeting's problems,
And shortly was nominated to Ministry and Oversight.

M and O didn't have a designated leader at that time.
Too politically charged for someone to want leadership.
"Don't make waves.
You might sink under the waves."
I prayed for the meeting,
Daily.
I prayed for everyone who walked through those doors.
By name.
And out of those prayers came my statement of the M and O agenda.
Nobody ever said, "Where's this crazy lady coming from,
That she seems to think she can lead us?"
Instead when I named the issues,
They turned their attention at once to wrestling with the problem—
They didn't wrestle with me,
They wrestled with the problem.
Eventually, I was made clerk of the meeting.
I was still mentally ill,
But I had a deep desire to give back to my meeting.
I loved them;
They were in a sticky wicket,
And I worked to help the meeting heal its wounds and move on—together.

The elders who taught me to be a Quaker are all gone now.
I'm the person who teaches others to be a Quaker.
I'm an elder now!
They taught me because they loved Quakerism
And because they loved me;
I teach others because I love Quakerism,
And I love the strangers who walk through our doors.
I see their hunger.
Someone fed me when I was hungry,
And now it's my turn to feed the hungry.
Jesus said, "Feed my lambs.
Feed my sheep."
There are a lot of hungry sheep out there,
And I yearn to feed them.
That was the legacy of my Quaker elders.
Now I'm an elder, and it's my turn to pass on the legacy.
Every one of us is an elder in the making in our meeting.
Think about the legacy you received,
And the legacy you want to leave behind.



Process

Nan George, Columbia Monthly Meeting



i stand and tremble before…spirit
i tremble in the fear of…
being seen
i fear the velvet jackhammer
boring through concrete
until perimeter walls are crushed
interior walls fall
walls protecting
the inner sanctum
crumble
and then…

naked
i stand
exposed
to all that is
and is not
and—
cascading—
the pain tears
i have held for ever
and for all
tumble
through me
to mingle with
the tears shed
by all
in all time

immersed in the
rip tides—
the tears
crash in wildness
rushing
sinking
sliding—
downward



then—a deep sigh—
and Spirit enters…
and the tears
calm
and there is
a breathing out
of healing…
embracing all
in the wholeness
that is
Love

Directions to the Panting Soul

Isaac Penington

Give over thine own willing,
Give over thine own running,
Give over thine own desiring
to know or be anything.

Sink down to the seed that God sows in thy heart.
Let that seed be in thee,
and grow in thee,
and breathe in thee
and act in thee,

And thou wilt find by sweet experience
that the Lord knows that
and loves
and owns that.

And the Lord will remain with that
which is [His portion] in thee.

God will lead it to the inheritance of life.

Isaac Penington, From "Some Directions to the Panting Soul," In *Works*, Volume II, pp. 205-6 (1661). Arranged by David Hadley Finke.

Justice

Patricia McMillen

Is it better to stone a woman to death
for adultery, or for murder?

Say: for murder, in case adultery
has left her with child.

Say: for adultery, because at least
she has tasted happiness before death.

Is it better to hang a man high
for treason, or for homosexuality?

Say: for homosexuality, because
his lover will not pierce the skies
with a woman's ululations of grief.

Say: for treason, because the flag
cannot defend itself.

Which parent will the child
miss least? Which sibling, which
cousin, which child brings least joy
to aunt, to brother, sister,
to mother, cousin, father?

That is the one you should stone
first. Evidence of actual crime,
if any, is irrelevant.



Youthful vigor at
Blue River Quarterly Meeting.

Meetinghouse Green Roof

Chris Goode, Noel Pavlovic, Adrian Fisher and Roy Treadway for the Environmental Concerns Committee

The Illinois Yearly Meetinghouse was built in 1875 and was substantially unchanged until a 1940s renovation dug a new basement under one half of the building for use as a dining room. A portion of this kitchen has a low slope roof that sits about three to four feet above grade. The roof is covered with a thick black single-ply roof membrane with welded joints. As the kitchen is on the south side of the building, the roof absorbs a lot of sunlight. This, together with the heat generated by cooking for 150 people, makes the kitchen a hot room during annual sessions, which are held in June. The combination of flat roof and strong concrete structure low to the ground suggests a "green roof" consisting of native plants and soil over the top of the membrane, absorbing precipitation, reducing run-off, reflecting sunlight and adding insulation value to the roof, as well as providing a greater aesthetic value of plants, flowers, and herbs instead of a black, ugly, hot roof.

The Environmental Concerns Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting investigated various ways to "green" this roof with suitable plants. Among commercial firms, several companies market green roof systems including the drainage fabric, trays, soil media, and plants and can install the whole system, but do not sell the components separately. When the two commercial systems were priced for the entire 480 square feet of flat roof area over the kitchen, the costs ranged from $7,756 to $5,500, depending on whether seeds or plants and installation were provided.



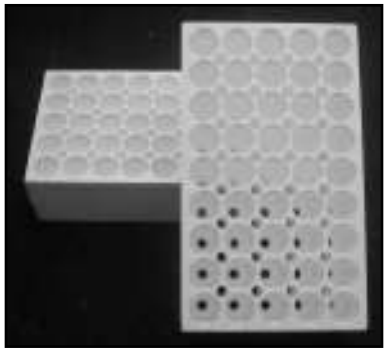
The back of ILYM Meetinghouse.
The lower roof in the center will become a green roof.

Thus, the Committee turned to developing its own "green roof" materials, choosing to use a modular system, which uses trays that are filled with soil media and placed on the roof. This system allows the trays to be removed for repair or replacement of the roof membrane without destroying the plants, but has limitations on depth of the soil. An extensive roof design is being used, where the growing medium, an inorganic medium, is less than six inches, added on to an existing roof. The components of the extensive roof will be roof deck/insulation/waterproofing (which is already in place), a protection and storage layer (trays lined with root barrier); a drainage layer (inorganic medium), a root-permeable filter layer (semi-permeable polypropylene fabric), and a growing medium (inorganic/organic blend, mostly inorganic).

Finding suitable trays proved to be challenging since few were available for small, do-it-yourself projects like the one for the meetinghouse. Many were too expensive per unit or needed too much modification to work properly. Other trays were available for starting plants but most of these are constructed of thin, flimsy plastic and are designed to be compartmented for separate plants. Eventually three possible trays with different designs were found.

Tournesol Siteworks, LLC, in San Diego, manufactures trays made of a sturdy flexible black plastic, which have a small drainage hole located at each corner and a root barrier fabric included in each tray. While they were not inexpensive at $22.00 ($5.50 per square foot) for the 4 inch deep 4 square foot tray, the company had no trays in stock and would not have the raw materials to manufacture the trays until the end of August. These trays are shown in the top picture.







From top to bottom: Tournesol Rooftrays, Beaver Hortiblocks and Beaver Totes.

Beaver Plastics, a company in Alberta, Canada, makes polystyrene trays, 23.625 inches by 13.875 inches, called Hortiblocks, with rows of open cells and bottom drainage, designed to start trees for the forestry industry but which could also be used for roof trays. Individual plants can be placed in each cell but the roots will not intermingle. As these trays are made of a foam material they should provide additional insulation, but will need some kind of drainage fabric for use under these trays in addition to the root barrier fabric. These trays were the least expensive at about $6.00 each ($2.63 per square foot) and are shown in the middle picture.

Beaver Plastics also makes an ABS (hard black) plastic tray (called a tote tray) 21 inches by 13.125 inches and 4 inches deep that can be drilled for drainage holes. These are very high quality trays with an uncertain price since Beaver Plastics was willing to give us ten trays of each type to use for our study (from their research budget); they drilled holes in them for us. These trays are shown in the bottom picture.

The trays will hold about 17 to 18 cubic feet of soil media. Although we can purchase about 14 cubic feet formulated for green roofs at Compost Supply in Newark, Illinois this may be sufficient after we allow room taken up by the plants. Some of the trays will have a root barrier material to prevent roots from penetrating the waterproofing layer below while others will have the root barrier material placed underneath the trays. A polypropylene fabric will be used for a root permeable filter layer to prevent the organic soil on top from clogging the drainage layer. Skyland, a compost supply, will provide a mostly inorganic layer for our trays with two components; the growing media are “Rooflite Extensive MC” and the drainage layer is “Rooflite Drain.”

The most important criteria for plants for a green roof are root depth, life span, and drought tolerance. For a four inch deep tray, the annual and perennial plants should have short stature and shallow roots. Since trays on a roof will be saturated with water after a rain event, but will be dry in the absence of rain; plants, such as succulents, should be drought tolerant and absorb moisture when it is available. Other important criteria for selection are plant height, foliage color, and flower color. A variety of native and non-native plants have been chosen for the green roof, some of which are shown in the picture

below. These plants are Sempervivum species (includes hen and chicks), Phemeranthus (Talinum) rugospermus (fame flower), Allium cernuum (prairie onion). Allium scheonprasum (chives), and Dianthus (pinks).

Because the trays were received in late August 2010, the summer was needed to establish the various succulent plants that should grow and mature further over the winter in a sheltered, attended place. The plan is to continue to let them grow in flats over the winter at Triton College in River Grove, Illinois. During the Environmental Concerns Committee retreat in Spring 2011, the various layers of growing material will be assembled in the trays and the mature plants will be put in the trays. The plants will adjust to and fill the trays and be ready to put on the Illinois Yearly Meetinghouse kitchen roof sometime in the Spring of 2011. The progress of the establishment of the plants on the"green roof" will be monitored over the Summer of 2011, particularly comparing the differences in the three types of trays. The "Green Roof" project has been aided by a Quaker Earthcare Witness Mini-Grant. Hopefully by Fall 2011, the success of the Illinois Yearly Meeting Environmental Concerns Committee's "Green Roof" Project can be reported.



Possible plants for the green roof.

Death, Dying, Grief and Transitions

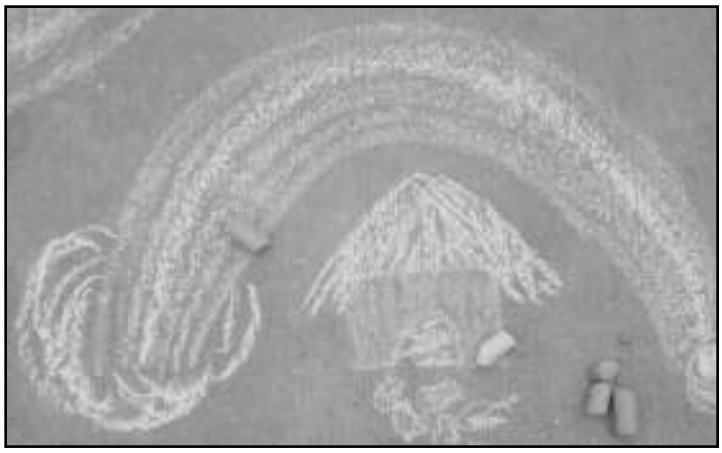
Ministry and Advancement Committee

About a year ago, the Ministry and Advancement Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting created a subcommittee on death, dying, grief, and transitions. A prevailing culture of denial about death and dying leaves many Friends ill-prepared when we or our loved ones sicken and die. Our meetings are also ill-prepared to help one another. The subcommittee's purposes at this time are to help Friends deal with death as an integral part of our spiritual lives, and to practice loving community in the face of a death. The tasks the subcommittee have chosen to focus on are:

- Taking death back from the medical and funeral home industries by preparing for end of life issues with such things as a Power of Attorney, advance directives, and preplanning of burials and memorials.
- Providing for more soulful transitions by supporting patient, family and friends during a terminal illness, and helping friends and families after death has occurred.
- Providing guidelines for mourners who at intense times must deal with practicalities immediately after death, including the memorial service.
- Helping to break down our culture of denial by collecting Friends' stories about being present at a death.

The basic premises of the subcommittee are that every death is a spiritual experience, and if Friends can be helped to go into that experience with that expectation, we help make possible spiritual growth through choosing to be fully present in all stages of the death, dying, grief, and transitions process.

A Memorial Meeting Preparation Checklist, the first product of the subcommittee, will be distributed to monthly meetings. It is also available on the ILYM website at www.ilym.org/MnAdocs. In addition, some Friends have begun reviewing a few resources that may be of help in intense times. As these reviews become available, they will be added to the website. Some of the stories that Friends have shared about being with dying loved ones are also available at the above website address. It is hoped that these documents will be helpful to you when the time comes to help a Friend die. The subcommittee also welcomes suggestions of resources that might be valuable as it continues its work—as well as your own stories of helping a loved one die. Please send suggestions to Mariellen Gilpin (mariellen.gilpin ☺ gmail.com).



Dialogue with Opposition

Joan Pine, Evanston monthly Meeting of Friends

While many Friends were attending the Friends General Conference Gathering in Ohio the first week in July, Michael and I visited friends at Chautauqua, a conference grounds in upstate New York that draws people from all over the U.S. with a cafeteria of thought-provoking speakers, religious expressions, musical performances, and art.

I returned newly aware of how often we Friends talk only to ourselves and to others who are like-minded. Speaker after speaker noted that our country has become locked in hostile polarization—due partially to gerrymandering of congressional districts and partially to campaign fundraising, but furthered also by Americans' widespread tendency to discuss important issues only with folks who are likely to agree with their position. For example, what do we Friends do when a relative or co-worker makes an extreme statement that counters our convictions? I suspect I'm not the only one to rationalize, "Why risk an unpleasant confrontation when the other person's mind is already made up?" Or I'll confess to someone else, "I just didn't know what to say."

Why risk an unpleasant confrontation when the other person's mind is already made up?

God has a way of re-winding the tape until we learn from a past mistake. So, several months ago, Michael got some messages from a former college classmate that seemed too bigoted to ignore. A month later, a cousin forwarded me a similarly biased email. This time, each of us tried to answer respectfully, acknowledging the pain of incidents that the writers cited to justify such feelings, but also reminding them of conditions that are causing pain on the other side. We gently included background information that they may not have known or considered. We related our own experiences and those of family members to show why we have a different perspective. And we acknowledged any points on which we could agree, even if it was only that the issue is important and deserves more attention.

The outcomes surprised us both. Michael's correspondent promptly thanked him for the opportunity to re-examine his own attitude. After my cousin and I exchanged a few more messages, she attended a commencement where a woman from the group she had maligned told about her struggles—and my cousin said she was moved to tears.

What I am learning is that "breaking down the dividing walls of hostility" requires looking for and acknowledging the truth in the mind of the other. An eloquent rabbi at Chautauqua reminded us that one cannot be made in the image of God without having some truth, even if it is only a fragment of the whole truth on a particular issue. It is equally important to testify respectfully to the truth we know. It usually helps to relate a personal experience, because that lifts the dialogue: one's own story is not arguable. And because stories are easily remembered, a personal account carries weight.

Electronic correspondence can be re-read and edited, while spontaneous and face-to-face conversations are not so easy. However, I suspect we improve with practice. So our own calling to "speak truth to power" might be to welcome dialogue with contentious relatives or neighbors, uncomfortable as it may be, while relying on the Spirit's guidance.

What It Takes to Run a Gathering

Dawn Amos, ILYM Co-Treasurer

There are a lot of things to love—and a few to find annoying— at the annual sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Quakers outside the region tell us that, more than other yearly meetings, Illinois Yearly Meeting feels like a family reunion. And just like going home at Thanksgiving, some things might make us roll our eyes, but we look forward to spending time with our extended Quaker family anyway.

Serving as co-treasurer, I'm in a position to witness what a huge amount of volunteer time goes into making yearly meeting happen. Not only is there significant planning and footwork in advance and on site, but each participant is asked to do a share of the work during the 5-day gathering. I am also in a unique position to see the financial costs of running a retreat. Have you ever wondered where your $30 daily registration fee goes?

Historically, about 60% covers the food, including the days of labor for our cook (who in recent years has been Zach Schobernd, a long-time part of our ILYM family) in a hot, cramped kitchen. Years ago, Christopher Sammond told us that feedback about Friends General Conference gatherings was most vociferous about meals. He theorized that food addresses our most basic human needs, and that food provision is an indicator of being cared for. ILYM wants to be responsive to your needs regarding meals. If you have a restriction that prevents your enjoying a meal at yearly meeting, please be sure to ask our cook for an alternative. Please try to indicate your restrictions when you register, and please complete a survey form at the end of yearly meeting so that planners can improve the experience in future years.

The other 40% of the daily registration fee covers “program expenses.” In any given year, program expenses might include the following:

- Speaker honorarium
- Speaker travel
- Speaker lodging
- Friday night band
- Babysitting
- Youth & craft tent supplies
- Paper & cleaning supplies and site prep purchases
- Tent rental
- Furniture rental
- Printing (brochures, advance documents, signage)
- Port-o-let and dumpster rental
- Reduced-fee registrations (financial assistance for attending)



This list can give you an idea of what expenses to plan for whenever a group organizes a retreat or gathering. It can be tricky to calculate a registration fee that covers all the expenses, particularly when it is difficult to predict the number of attendees who will share those costs or need financial assistance. Finance committee has published some guides that might help budget for and plan a retreat; see them at www.ilym.org/Finance. Please contact any member of ILYM Finance committee to suggest revisions or additions to these guides.

Clerk's Corner

David Finke, ILYM Presiding Clerk

"Quaker Process." What is it? Sometimes the phrase is invoked when we think some other Friend is not following it. It is not easily defined, though we usually recognize it when we experience it. I believe it is one of our most treasured characteristics.

I see it all the time as I witness the committee work and our business sessions in our Yearly Meeting. Usually it is like the water in which the fish swim or the air that sustains the birds—always there, not having to think about it. But I do want to think it about with you—briefly here, and any other time that you want us corporately to give attention to it.



We can recognize that Quaker Process is different from "the ways of the World." That world, and American culture in particular, is pragmatic. "Let's get it done!"—usually with an emphasis on speed and efficiency. Feelings and interpersonal relations are either secondary, or may be seen as potential obstacles to a task-orientation. Being "practical" and "realistic" are values sometimes thrown at us if someone thinks our traditional Quaker ways are getting in the way of accomplishment. At its worst, the World's ways become Machiavellian—"By any means necessary!"

Quaker Process, however, starts from a very different First Premise. And whether or not we explicitly use this language, the underlying theory is that we approach all questions with, "What is God's Will for us in this matter?"

Quaker Process assumes Discipleship—that we are ready to learn from the Holy Spirit, the "Christ [who] has come to teach his people himself." "Disciple" and "discipline" come from the same Greek root—about learning—which requires being open and humble. Early Friends would have spoken about "yielding" and "submitting" our own wills, sinking down to the Seed which is God's Principle, giving Life, available to all.

But Quaker Process proceeds on a different timetable from what our insistent, hectic modern way of life assumes is "normal." Rather, "Love is patient and kind," as Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth famously reminds us. This takes time, as well as the discipline of not letting our own Ego take first place. We may be pushed beyond our "comfort zone" when having to practice the forbearance of listening to, bearing with, Friends who have a different measure of Truth than our own.

How do we experience Time in Quaker Process? It is part of our being united in "the things that are Eternal" and thus beyond our usual, secular sense of how long things ought to take. It is why we ought not to be rushed. Of the two Greek words for "time," this one is *Kairos* rather than *Chronos*. We know the latter as mechanical time—what is on a chronometer, the tick-tock which measures our lives and work, the time clock of daily existence. But "Kairotic" time is the "fullness of time," when something is ripe and ready, like a pregnancy coming to full term. When we come to a Sense of the Meeting, we know we are in God's Time. Good, true Quaker Process is attuned to that pace of God's Spirit moving among us.

All this has to do with the relationship of "means" and "ends." *How* we do something is as

important as *what* we do, what we accomplish. Gandhi had said that "means are the ends in the making." We may, in our lifetimes, not actually get to the goals we set, but we are always "on the way." So *how* we conduct ourselves—as distinct from *what* we produce—is vitally important, the realm in which we are called to be faithful.

We may become impatient with the seemingly slow pace required when we must listen deeply to another Friend, who may to "drive us up the wall." But also, have not we all had that amazing experience of a new and better decision coming forth, beyond our first desires and advocacy, when we give ourselves over to Quaker Process? The subtle alchemy of God's creativity and transformative Power entering into our deliberations is only possible when we move to a different rhythm, and let the Source give us Life. I trust we can remember these insights, and help each other uphold them, as we do our work within ILYM.



Looking Back on Our Faith and Practice

From *Discipline and Advices of Illinois Yearly Meeting, 1878*

Excerpt from Gospel Ministry (p. 9)

As all ability is useful when under right direction, we desire that all, including those who feel themselves called to the ministry, should carefully cultivate and use every talent they may possess, to the end that their labor may be broader and more useful, because it is clothed in the language and conceptions of a well developed mind, kept under the leadings of the spirit of Truth.

Days and Times (p. 13-14)

Friends have always as a people avoided the use of the customary titles for the months of the year and days of the week, originally because they were mostly adopted in honor of mythical deities or idols, and because the few numerical names were no longer correct.

While there is at the present time no purpose of deification or superstitious regard in the use of the usual terms, nor any reason of this character why we should not use them, as well as the names of planets chosen in the same way, we think the simplicity and truthfulness of our numerical titles for the months and days fully justifies us in maintaining our distinct language in these cases, and therefore advise our members to adhere to the custom, as a testimony to the correct principles upon which we believe it to be founded.

In a Toxic Chemical Stew—What Can Friends Do?

Nancy Halliday, Evanston Monthly Meeting of Friends

Rachel Carson's 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, was the first large-scale attempt to warn the public about toxic synthetic chemicals. Despite vigorous opposition from the chemical industry, her evidence linking bird deaths to widespread use of the insecticide DDT proved correct. The subsequent banning of DDT and the resurgence of bird populations seemed to address the problem of toxic synthetic chemicals.

Synthetic chemicals have become so integrated into products of everyday use that they cannot be avoided.

Unfortunately, the problem has barely begun. Since World War II, approximately 80,000 synthetic chemicals have been manufactured, with hundreds more added every year. Due to regulatory and political restrictions, only a small percentage has been tested for human safety. Many of these chemicals are endocrine disruptors, of which DDT is one. Endocrine disruptors work by imitating hormones, often the female hormone estrogen, thereby causing imbalance in bodily functions. Our bodies have evolved over millennia into fine-tuned, self-regulatory mechanisms, able to respond to concentrations of elements as small as one part per billion.

Synthetic chemicals have become so integrated into products of everyday use that they cannot be avoided. Traces are found in our air, our water, in soil, in clothing, furniture and construction materials, in our cooking utensils and foods, in cosmetics—literally everywhere, even at the poles of the earth. As these chemicals disseminate, they may combine to make other compounds with unpredictable reactions, creating havoc in the environment and in our bodies. We have seen the effect of DDT on birds. Today, human health may be in danger. Prostate cancer, once considered a disease of the elderly, is being found increasingly in younger and younger men. Sperm counts are significantly reduced. Medical research is beginning to link the unexplained rise of autism, attention-deficit disorder, diabetes type I, asthma, and even obesity in young children to environmental causes, not genetic predisposition.

Global warming has received much attention in recent years. Yet the earth has undergone many temperature changes in its 4.5-billion-year history, some of them drastic and far greater than predictions for the present climate shift, and life has survived. However, nothing in life has evolved to metabolize these utterly foreign, synthetic compounds. Humans are now interfering with the basic mechanisms at the very source of all life on this planet. Many scientists are now warning that biochemical disruption is a greater cause for alarm than global climate change.

Plastic, one of the many compounds widely produced since World War II, unfortunately has physical as well as chemical properties that can be lethal to other species. Plastics do not biodegrade; plastics also float. Volumes of plastic trash have found their way into the oceans and are concentrated by currents into literally floating dumps. The most famous is the Great Pacific Gyre, reported to be at least as wide as Texas. The larger pieces are picked up by such species as albatrosses, who innocently feed them to their young, who in turn die from the accumulated indigestible materials. Wind, waves, and sun break down the plastics into ever and ever smaller particles, entering the chain of life at different levels. Most of this trash is composed of trinkets, items non-essential for our survival, yet they are causing deaths of thousands of animals.

Every civilization has come to an end; we must realize that ours will also. What will future archaeologists find? Let us hope it is not a tell-tale layer of plastics and persistent poisons.

What can Friends do?

1. Restrict buying of plastics; use glass for food storage.
2. Read the following articles or books and educate yourselves on specific products to buy or avoid.
3. Insist on stricter laws for rigorous testing of chemical products and full-disclosure labeling.
4. Push for laws prohibiting the sale to other nations of chemicals banned in this country and prohibiting importation of chemicals deemed dangerous to human health.

Bibilography

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Messages about the Work of Project Lakota

Arriving in Pine Ridge, I met up with the leader of the Lakota Project. From there we were taken to a almost new log cabin. There were no rain gutters. The plumbing was in terrible shape. Leaking pipes under the sink had rotted the floors. The linoleum on the floors was not glued on. Things like these, if not fixed can destroy a home. A fourth of all houses are deteriorating because of no funds to fix them. There are about 20% who still use outdoor facilities which can be very unsanitary for children and the elderly. It is very expensive to hook up electricity to homes out in the rural areas. Bad dirt roads from the main highway to a home is another problem. Gravel is very expensive. These roads cause problems for the elderly, since if it rains or snows medicine cannot be dispersed to them.

The Lakota Project is a very important project for the Lakota people. The Oglala Sioux tribal government can only help a few because of budget cuts. I grew up on the Sioux nation and I know that it will not change without the help of the Lakota Project, even though it may seem like a drop in the bucket. We, the Sioux nation, need organizations like Lakota Project to assist us. I have seen the grateful smiles of the the people after a home project was done.

Randy Youngwolf

I would like to share with you something that Project Lakota has done for us. Our tribe was sent many FEMA trailers, but each person who wanted one had to pay $2900 for one. We were in desperate need for one, but could never have afforded the money to get one because my parents and I are on disability. Between the three of us we bring in a little over $2000 a month. The trailer we were living in needed extensive repair on the plumbing before we could even get hooked up to water or have a septic system installed by the tribe. We had been without running water for five years, except for our well, which enabled us to carry water into the house for drinking and other needs. Thanks to the generosity and caring of Project Lakota, we now have a FEMA trailer. More than that they got a local group to install a handicap ramp and steps for the back door as well as install the skirting for us. Project Lakota paid for the materials. We are in the process of having water hooked up to water and by mid-November we should have our septic system installed as well. For the first time in five years, we will be in a modernized home.

Here on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, there are still so many people who do not have what we now have. To this end, I ask, for all their sakes, that if you are able to give anything to charity, that you would give to Project Lakota. I can promise that they put all donated money to good use. And I would thank you on behalf of all my people for being so generous in your giving. Even if you can only give a small amount, you are still being generous. I truly believe you will be repaid in someway, even if it is just in the joy of knowing you have helped so many people by your giving to Project Lakota.

Thank you so very much (Pilamaya)

Tammy McGaa



Working on a gutter project.

Digging a septic tank.



It was the summer of 2009 when I met Candi Boyd for the first time and this was also my first encounter with Project Lakota. I was working at a community thrift store and had no idea what Project Lakota was. My grandmother introduced me to Candi, and I was immediately curious to find out what she did here. I later asked my grandmother what Project Lakota was. She told me that the project helps families on the reservation (Pine Ridge Indian Reservation) with housing repairs and winterization, in addition to many other things. At the time Candi was working with my grandmother, and they were making plans to move her trailer house from the community we lived in Oglala to Red Shirt Table. Once the move was made there were also repairs that were needed. In the previous year, Project Lakota repaired the floor on my grandmother's home and that year preparations for winter, plumbing and sewage had to be made. As they made arrangements to get things underway, I approached Candi and asked Project Lakota for their assistance with my current housing situation. I had moved back to the reservation in December of 2008. At the time I had been living with my grandma and was making efforts to get a trailer house of my own. Candi informed me that Project Lakota would be able to fulfill my request. That summer we made our move to the country, and Project Lakota made numerous repairs on my grandmother's house. That summer, I also assisted Project Lakota with some repairs and clean up of another family's property. In October 2009, I received my trailer house. This past summer, Project Lakota helped stabilize and winterize my trailer house. Project Lakota also assisted in setting up our plumbing and septic systems. This past summer I once again had the pleasure of working with Project Lakota in making repairs to a log house they built for a family a few years ago. My experiences with Project Lakota have been wonderful and enjoyable. They are making a difference one family at a time and I am honored to have helped and been helped by Project Lakota. I look forward to working with them again as well as being able to see the impact they will make in the future.

Ana Jessica Alvarez

Adopt Your Neighborhood Prison

Barbara Kessel, Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting

As the states are running short of money, public services are being curtailed from transportation to public education to police departments and prisons/jails. In states such as Michigan and New York, this has meant some early release of prisoners that closed a couple of prisons in each state. In Illinois, prisons have been on the front lines of budget cuts since 2002 when libraries and educational programs got severely trimmed. The Illinois prison population has grown from 45,000 in December 2009 to 48,500 in December 2010. The recidivism rate in Illinois last year was 51%, and it costs over $20,000 a year in Illinois to keep a prisoner in a state prison. Since reading (and educational programs of any kind) really does reduce recidivism, this means that as a state, we are being fiscally foolish.

The "Three R's Project: Reading Reduces Recidivism" was founded out of a compassionate concern for the plight of prisoners, both those who will be there for most or all of their lives and the vast majority who are coming back into our communities. The title was meant to point to the practical implications of replenishing the prison's libraries.

Three R's Project, Reading Reduces Recidivism

Our plan of action is to establish small groups, or to find dedicated individuals who will take on the project of "adopting" a nearby prison by gathering donations that match the needs articulated by the prison librarian and transporting the books to the prison gates. We, in the core group of six volunteers with Books to Prisoners, put up a website (www.3rsproject. org), have met with leaders at the Illinois Department of Corrections, and make the calls to the librarians in the system to set up the first connection between community group/chapter of 3Rs and the closest prison that is open to donations.

On August 31, 2010, the first chapter to come into existence was the Oak Park/River Forest Third Unitarian Church. Around ten people strong, they delivered approximately a dozen boxes of books, including a fine donation of books from the Art Institute, to Dwight Correctional Center, the largest women's prison in Illinois, on November 4. They aim to make a delivery every month. The second chapter is made up of two individuals, one in Effingham and the other in Charleston. They have collected 25 boxes of books delivered in December to Robinson Correctional Center and Lawrence Correctional Center (about twenty miles south of Robinson). A third group was being established the same weekend as the Continuing Committee—in Carbondale at Southern Illinois University. One of its members is the clerk of Carbondale meeting, Jill Adams.

On October 23, Illinois Yearly Meeting Continuing Committee met in Evanston and a plea for statewide support was made. The result was the adoption of this statement: “Continuing Committee unites with Urbana-Champaign’s recommendation to encourage Friends to explore possibilities of setting up centers by local meetings.” The immediate result of that was a very quick interest in two more prisons: Northside Friends Meeting was interested in becoming a chapter and asked for a prison, which may very well be Sheridan. Dixon is a possibility for friends in Upper Fox River Valley Meeting and Clear Creek at McNabb. Grace Messner regularly visits a prisoner there. There is also ongoing work building a Springfield chapter (involving the clerk of the Springfield Friends meeting) for Decatur, a women's prison for mothers and a Bloomington chapter that could go in several directions to a nearby prison.

Continued on page 27

Chicago Friends School

Sophie de la Mar, Board Member

On September 7, 2010, Chicago opened its first Quaker school, the Chicago Friends School. On a Tuesday morning filled with sunshine and promise, we welcomed our inaugural class of eight wide-eyed students. In the almost three months since then, we have transformed 2205 W. Belmont into a warm, nurturing place where Ceci, Lilly, Heidi, Jad, Caleb, Niko, Avery, and Sophia can learn and grow.

But it's not the building that makes a home, it is the people within. Lizzy Carmichael, our very enthusiastic and well-credentialed teacher, and Zoe Rei, our teaching assistant and wonderful teacher of movement and art, with the help of the Chicago Friends School community of friends, family, and supporters, are doing amazing work. Their teaching is grounded in the Quaker values of peace, simplicity, integrity, equality, service, and community—values that Chicago and the world community sorely need. Their commitment to their teaching makes the school run smoothly despite our extremely limited funds.

Regarding the students, Lizzy reflects, "Classroom life is very lively. The students are so great; they are creative, engaged, bright, and often rambunctious. All the children interact and play together, with no visible exclusions. This is great, given the age ranges. Younger students are clearly motivated and interested in the work of older students, which has jump-started/charged the learning for many."

The board continues to work hard to develop the curriculum, support and develop the teachers, develop policies and procedures related to personnel and operations, develop our base of funding support, and much, much more. We would love to have more board members (as the saying goes "Many hands make light work"). If you have an interest in serving, please contact Mark Robinson (mark☺chicagofriendsschool.org) or Faith Gately (Fgately☺childrensmemorial.org) who serve on our Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving on a committee or have a talent or skill you would like to share, but don't wish to serve on the board, let us know that, too. Thanks for all the support for Chicago Friends School.



Square dancing at 2010 annual sessions.

The ILYM Traveling Bookstore

Paul Buckley, ILYM Field Secretary

In the last couple of years, an accidental ministry has been growing up as part of my travels in the yearly meeting. It began simply enough. I had some books, pamphlets, and other materials on outreach that I though might be of value to our meetings, so I threw them in a box and carried them along as I visited with monthly meetings and worship groups. Inevitably, someone wanted to borrow one or another of them. At first, I was reluctant to let go—these were my personal copies and I had accumulated them over a period of years. What if they got lost? What if I couldn't replace them? But good sense lost out to trusting that this was a leading, however indistinct it was at the time.

Over the years, Illinois Yearly Meeting has tried several times to have a lending library, never with a great deal of success. We are spread over four states and the logistics of getting books to people and collecting them again have proven daunting—this is, of course, just a fancy way to say that we never were able to figure out how to do it. Books went out with some difficulty and came back with even more. I had talked to some of those who were involved in those attempts and their advice was uniform—don't do it. I decided to just give books away.

This simplified the process considerably, but (as you might guess) it became expensive. To help meet this problem, Ministry & Advancement Committee agreed to pay for one book per meeting, but even that began to look too expensive—after only a few months, I had over-spent the entire M&A budget. And that was limiting things to one book or pamphlet per meeting. This was not fiscally responsible or sustainable.

At the same time, individuals began to ask if they could buy books. It seemed silly to say no and a traveling bookstore was born. Since then, I have sold dozens of books and pamphlets. Nearly every month, I have to order replacement books and new additions from the FGC bookstore. Many of the new books come from suggestions made by browsing Friends.

But the story is not over. Last summer, I acquired the remnants of one of the old yearly meeting libraries. Since these books were used and cost nothing, I have been offering them for a donation. The income has paid the shipping costs for the books sent by FGC. As these books have been put back in use, others have been donated to replacement them. These have come both from individuals and the extra copies in some meeting libraries.

This feels like an important ministry for the yearly meeting and one that I have been called to do. Not only that, it has also been a spiritually rewarding one—for me and, I think, for many of those who have bought books.

Let me invite you to join in this work. If you have old Quaker books that are not being read, but still have life in them, please pass them along or send them to me ("Media Mail" from the Post Office is pretty cheap) and I will get them back in circulation.

Books can be sent to:

Paul Buckley
ILYM Field Secretary
522 Lord St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Evanston Monthly Meeting of Friends
Nancy Halliday

Members and attenders of Evanston Meeting shared the joy of Kathryn Buscombe and Gerald Herrera as they were married on May 29 in the Meetinghouse. We welcomed new members Alyce Barry, Tom Simpson, George Ronczy, Laura Lavoie and David Summerhays. We are delighted to report the births of seven babies in our meeting community (not all from the same parents, of course). Every meeting also loses members. George Ronczy, Josh Vura-Weis and Ann Horton-Weis relocated for employment elsewhere, and Barbara Williamson retired to a community in North Carolina. We wish them success and happiness in their new surroundings. Sara Gmitter has been accepted as a student at the University for Peace in Costa Rica and departed in August for her year of study there. We look forward to hearing from her regularly. On July 11, we held a recognition celebration to welcome our newborns and to show appreciation to our relocating Friends for their participation and service. We shared the sorrow of our long-time member Eleanor Johnson at a memorial service for her daughter, Virginia Johnson, who died suddenly on September 1 at the retirement home where they both lived.

We responded to the FCNL request for our leadings as they set priorities for the year ahead. The possibility of hosting a Quaker Quest is still being explored. We began the 2010-2011 school year with several workshops and retreats. A retreat assessing the Meeting's strengths and needs was held on September 12, and a clerking workshop for committee chairs took place on September 25. Our annual silent retreat will be held at Menno Haven from October 29 to 31. We formed a number of new spiritual nurture groups in addition to the two already in existence. Our Meeting for Learning (following Meeting for Worship) discussion theme for the coming year is "Strengthening and Deepening Our Spiritual Community." The Nominating Committee for FWCC met on October 15 to 17 at Evanston Monthly Meeting. We also hosted ILYM Continuing Committee on October 23.

The practice of closing our Meeting for Worship with requests for prayers had been a rich source of sharing members' deepest concerns and reminds us to tender each other for the burdens we carry. Several members have had serious illnesses; we held them in the Light and rejoiced at their recoveries. We have added a new procedure as well—rather than introducing just new attenders following Meeting for Worship, we all introduce ourselves. It takes only a few minutes and in a Meeting as large as ours, it helps all of us remember names.

Lake Forest Friends Meeting
Pam Kuhn

Lake Forest Friends have been enjoying worship and fellowship in our monthly meeting. Our First Day School is doing a program on Stewardship. In the past couple months, the children have been considering gifts, talents, and resources we each have as individuals, and how we can be good stewards of these. On months with five Sundays, after meeting on the last Sunday we will break into small groups of a mix of children and adults to discuss a query together. We are looking forward to learning from each other.

The adult religious education group is using the book, *Holy Silence*, by J. Brent Bill. The author includes queries after each section which we have used in discussion or worship sharing. We have found it to be a good jumping off point for our group which meets before meeting.

We enjoyed having Anne Bennett from Britain

Yearly Meeting and Rachel Stacy from Baltimore Yearly Meeting for a program on peacemaking as part of the "Being Salt and Light" theme developed by FWCC Section of the Americas. We have also had good forums on Chicago Friends School, Friends Committee on National Legislation and Right Sharing of World Resources.

Oak Park Monthly Meeting
Pamela Timme and Adrian Fisher

As the dry fall of sunny days and early harvests had ended, our meeting had joined in the seasonal rhythm of gathering in, appreciating our bounty and preparing for winter. Our outreach to families continues. We have hired Amanda Sneed as our first Children's Religious Educator. She has excellent qualifications to instruct young Friends, and has prepared an appropriate curriculum. We hope that local families, who might have hesitated to attend our meeting owing to lack of an established children's program, will be attracted by our First Day School. On Halloween, we gave out fair trade chocolates along with First Day School information to trick-or-treaters who stop by the Oak Park Art League, which serves as our meeting house. Other outreach and community involvement efforts by the meeting as a whole or by individual members/attenders include hosting the Oak Park Community of Congregations Fall meeting, attending the Oak Park-River Forest Interfaith Green Network Fall meeting, organizing and participating in Oak Park Coalition for Truth and Justice events, and participating in the development of an Oak Park-River Forest sustainable community plan to be presented to village leaders next year.

Fall also marked our resumption of serving dinners to the homeless, through the PADS program. Val Lester continues to organize that effort. Friends and family gathered at Marti Matthews' home for worship, a meal and evening singalong in honor of Tom Dix. Rosalind Larson has settled in to her new home near family in Colorado, where she is helping to care for her infant grandson, who is recovering from surgery. We continue our concern for Elinor Fallert, who is housebound. Her caregiver reads to her and she appreciates receiving cards, notes and short reading materials such as newspaper clippings.

We invite everyone to visit our website at www.oakparkfriends.org. We also invite anyone in our area to join us during First Day meeting for worship, 10 a.m., Oak Park Art League, 720 Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park. All are welcome, especially families with children.

St. Louis Religious Society of Friends
Margaret Katranides

As with many meetings in towns with universities, the life of St. Louis Meeting is marked by comings and goings. The Advancement Committee, focused on drawing potential Friends to the meeting and then drawing them into the life of the meeting, is subject to the same phenomenon. This past June, the clerk of the committee, Adria (Blount) Gulizia, left to go to law school in New York. Adria's presence is missed on the committee as well as in meeting for worship and the Young Adult Friends group, which she instigated a couple of years ago.

The committee now has a beautiful oak revolving pamphlet rack—appropriately labeled "Among Friends"—donated by another member who is about to leave us. Andi Allen has closed her Peace of Mind bookshop and is moving to Ohio to be near older family members.

Now the meeting is look ahead to carrying on without these dear Friends. We see YAF re-organizing, enhanced by two new university students, one the son of a Meeting member and one a transplant from Twin Cities Meeting, and a young couple who recently moved from a

Chicago area meeting. As our fall re-organization is underway, we hope also to see new energy and new faces in Advancement Committee.

Of course, the meeting feels a big loss from Tom and Judi Paxson having moved to Pennsylvania. You do not replace such elders; you have to grow new ones and that takes years, plus acceptance of the fact that no new ones can ever be the same as those lost. Thanks to email, though, we can still consult! The absence of our inimitable clerk and recording clerk over the summer—Kurt on sabbatical and Elizabeth networking and researching for her job at the history museum—left us patching things together for 10 weeks. We delighted in Elizabeth's Facebook reports on the family's doings in California, but were relieved to see them back in meeting in August.

The summer of course is a busy time for families. The Thorp boys seemed always to be off on adventures—camping, Scouting, Space Camp, etc. Marguerite Daw went on the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. The Tamaris, and others, traveled to visit family members, swim in the ocean, and otherwise extend their education in ways not available during the school year.

The cooler weather of the Fall has arrived, schedules are settling down, and plans for the year are being taken up. We hope for new advancement, not only in numbers, but also in connections among us, and a deepening sense of having been called together to enjoy and grow in the Spirit. We hope for leadings and challenges. We hope for Life and Power.

From Adopt Your Neighborhood Prisons, page 22

For Quakers, this project requires very little "sell" because of our values. Nonetheless, the sell is this: The prison system is a pre-virtual world with no computers (that connect to the outside anyway). Thus, books assume an enormous importance, with non-fiction outweighing fiction. It is an information desert and the libraries are a shrinking waterhole. The importance of the "right books," perceived as valuable to inmates, cannot be exaggerated. In fact, it even calls to mind the situation of Abraham Lincoln teaching himself to read in his log cabin in Kentucky and the situation of Malcom X teaching himself to read by going through the dictionary, page by page. Incidentally, at Books to Prisoners where individual prisoners write to ask for books, the most popular request is the dictionary.

Beyond the consequences for prisoners, there is the effect on those who volunteer. We who love books get a chance to be intrigued both by what people donate and what prisoners want while at the same time exercising our compassion and our desire to help improve our society. We hope that our efforts in Three R's will go even further to spread more consciousness in the general population of our state that will help to counter the popular notions that nothing is too bad for prisoners to suffer and that punishment alone is redemptive.

While the project was conceived earlier this year by a group of six long-time volunteers in Books to Prisoners, it is only through religious networks, especially Illinois Yearly Meeting, that we have been able to take a quantum leap forward and spread our efforts around the state. It makes me proud to be a Quaker.

Friends interested in this project may contact Barbara Kessel (barkes ☺ gmail.com or 904B E. Colorado Ave., Urbana, IL 61801) for further information.

First-Day Thoughts

John Greenleaf Whittier

In calm and cool and silence, once again
I find my old accustomed place among
My brethren, where, perchance, no human tongue
Shall utter words; where never hymn is sung,
Nor deep-toned organ blown, nor censer swung,
Nor dim light falling through the pictured pane!

There, syllabled by silence, let me hear
The still small voice which reached the prophet's ear;

Read in my heart a still diviner law
Than Israel's leader on his tables saw!

There let me strive with each besetting sin,
Recall my wandering fancies, and restrain
The sore disquiet of a restless brain;

And, as the path of duty is made plain,
May grace be given that I may walk therein,
Not like the hireling, for his selfish gain,
With backward glances and reluctant tread,
Making a merit of his coward dread,
But, cheerful, in the light around me thrown,
Walking as one to pleasant service led;

Doing God's will as if it were my own,
Yet trusting not in mine, but in His strength alone!