

MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING
 OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
 Damariscotta, Maine
NEWSLETTER



O that we who declare war against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the light, and therein examine our foundation and motives in holding onto money! May we look upon our estates, our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these, our possessions.

—John Woolman, Journal (1774)

December

- Sunday December 5 1 p.m. * Food Pantry Day, please bring items for the basket in the meetinghouse
- Sunday December 12 rise of worship * Jan Schrock speaking on The Heifer Project
- Monday December 13 or asap thereafter Monthly Meeting for Business. NOTE: This is a change from the regular schedule
- Sunday December 19 rise of worship Call for January newsletter items
- Friday December 31 6 p.m. * Craft/food sale and celebration. Light lunch to share.
- * Potluck supper and candlelight Meeting for Worship
- ~ Advance Notice ~
- Sunday January 9 1:30-3:00 p.m. * New Book Discussion to begin
- Sunday January 23 rise of meeting * Visioning Discussion. All please come.

* Look inside for more information regarding these items
 ~ Calendar events are held at the meetinghouse, unless otherwise noted ~

Sunday Meeting for Worship is held at the meetinghouse, 77 Belvedere Road, Damariscotta, 10:00 a.m. Meetinghouse phone: 207-563-3757. Directions: Take US Route 1 to Damariscotta and turn onto Belvedere Road (left if coming from the south, right if coming from the north. The Miles Home Health Care building is on the corner.) The meetinghouse is the second building on the right, 2/10 mile from the corner

Back Issues of the Newsletter and Meeting Information are available at: www.midcoastfriendsmeeting.org

Friendly Reminders

Moving or changing your E-mail address? Don't forget to notify the newsletter of your changes. Electronic subscriptions via E-mail are environmentally friendly and cost the Meeting nothing. To receive your newsletter via the Web, E-mail a request to Nancy Terrell Hall at moonlite@lincoln.midcoast.com

Visit www.midcoastfriendsmeeting.org

The Entirely Unofficial **MONTHLY MEETING NOTES**, 11th month of 2004

based on draft minutes by William Spock, Alternate Recording Clerk

Co-Clerk Ernie Foust opened the meeting at 11:20 with a reading from the Meeting Handbook discussing the opportunities for all members to grow in faith and to support the Meeting as their resources and energy allow. This was followed by a period of silence. There were ultimately 19 in attendance. A draft of the minutes of the October Meeting was read and approved subject to the comments noted.

Nominating Committee

Pat Spock reported for the committee by distributing the list of proposed committee members and clerks. This is still a work in progress, to be completed by the December Monthly Meeting. Several important recommendations were approved, as noted.

Jean Crawford has graciously agreed to be Clerk of the Meeting, but will have three assistants – Barbara Foust, Carmen Lavertu, and the clerk of M&C, still to be chosen.

The Meetinghouse, Maintenance, and Landscape Committees will be merged into a single Meetinghouse and Grounds Committee. Hospitality, or some aspects of it, may also be included, and other members may act as consultants. It will be important for all members of the Meeting to support the work days, not just the committee members. The new M&G Committee will set priorities for the use of resources. Meetinghouse Use would continue to handle the actu-

al arrangements, but questions of appropriateness would go to the Clerk of the Meeting. These changes in structure will be reviewed by the end of next year.

Still needed are a Recording Clerk, and additional members for M&C and P&SC.

Further ideas are being solicited, including someone else to contract for the bimonthly cleaning.

Ministry & Counsel

Jean Crawford reported that the “second hour conversation” on vocal ministry, facilitated by Peter Haviland and Jerry Wood on October 24, was well attended. Among the many good thoughts expressed were: What is understood as “preparation” for Meeting for Worship (Do Friends keep silence? Pray? Meditate? Read? How often?). It is helpful to spend time together outside of Meeting so that we come to know what we have in common. Second hour conversations are appreciated as opportunities to share at a meaningful level.

About 70 adults were present for the Quarterly Meeting and the lunch hosted on Saturday, November 6. This number included 14 from other Meetings who also attended a Friday evening Quarterly Meeting Ministry & Counsel Committee meeting. Concerns were shared about bridging the divide between Friends and Christian conservatives. Visitations were planned to other Meetings, and ways to support young people were discussed, such as helping them to have their own meetings for business.

A Minute in memory of Ruth Kaltenbach that was presented by Deb Haviland was approved, with praise for its quality.

The question was raised about the reading of queries and advices at Meetings for Worship, rather than at another time. After discussion, it was concluded that those readings are appropriate in our unprogrammed meeting.

The Meeting was advised to develop a set of job descriptions to avoid uncertainties about various responsibilities for maintenance, possibly including them in the new edition of the Handbook.

Jean reported on the Visioning session on November 14 by distributing the notes compiled by Bill Spock from those taken by the recorders and by talking through her list of key words, that she also handed out. A lengthy discussion followed with comments on our haves, our wants, and our needs, on the difficulty of finding time to accomplish all our objectives, and the importance of resolving these issues. The conclusion was to have a report printed in the newsletter and to have the next meeting on January 23 at the rise of Meeting to decide on how to proceed. Jean Crawford and Bill Spock will work on the process.

continued on next page

Quaker Motto Calendar: A Gift from the Havilands

For a number of years Pete and Deb Haviland have enjoyed giving family and friends the Quaker Motto Calendar at Christmas. As in other years they would like to spread their gift to all members and attenders of Midcoast Meeting. Calendars will be on the credenza in early December. Please take one and enjoy it, with love and wishes for a joyous and peaceful year 2005.



Query #9

Stewardship

Do you revere all life and the splendor of God’s continuing creation? Do you try to protect the natural environment and its creatures against abuse and harmful exploitation? Do you regard your possessions as given to you in trust, and do you part with them freely to meet the needs of others? Are you frugal in your personal life and committed to the just distribution of the world’s resources?

Peace & Social Concerns

Holly Baldwin distributed notes from the committee meeting of November 11. She and Gretchen Hull reported on the major items.

Peace activities are growing. Bridges for Peace restarts today. Gretchen is organizing a peace and justice group in Lincoln County, and other groups meeting across Maine include Presence for Peace and One America.

People to People was founded 30 years ago by Midcoast Meeting with support from other churches to provide clothing and supplies to low income families. Support has dropped off, and they also must find a new location, improve leadership, raise funds, and increase the energy in the ecumenical community.

Discussions of *The Unconquerable World* by Jonathan Schell will be starting. Gretchen Hull has some paperback copies for sale.

The effort to introduce the history and culture of the Wabanakis into the school districts, as mandated by the state, needs support. Members of the Meeting are requested to visit their own districts to make sure they have the new Wabanaki book.

Jan Schrock will be invited to speak about the Heifer project on December 5 at 1:00. The community will be invited. Pat Spock and Deb Haviland will plan a craft show to be held after Meeting on December 12 or 19, whichever is best for Sylvia Tavares and Jane Dwyer. Some of the proceeds will go to the Heifer Project.

The many worthy activities supported and initiated by P&SC, all of which deserve assistance from members, have increased the concerns about the time and capability of the Meeting. Every individual feels responsibility to help in these and other functions, but there is an understanding that priorities must be set.

Finance Committee

Paul Diamond stated that pledges are down this year, and he fears that income will be \$2,000 under budget.

The next Monthly Meeting for Business will be Sunday, December 12, at 11:30 a.m., bag lunch. All welcome. NOTE: This is one week earlier than usual.

A Holiday Celebration to Benefit the Heifer Project

Sunday, December 19 at the rise of Meeting

Bring light lunch food to share.

Beverages provided.

Sylvia Tavares and Jane Dwyer will be selling their wonderful handmade crafts. All members are invited to bring their own crafts and food to sell to raise funds for this worthwhile cause.

Book Discussion January 9th

On Sunday, January 9, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. (after Bridges), a discussion of *The Unconquerable World* by Jonathan Schell will held. This book, which was reviewed in these pages a couple of years ago, is now available paperback at \$16. Copies can be obtained from Gretchen Hull or at your local bookstore.

This book provides a review of the historical rationales for war, an overview of the peace movement which has existed side by side with the war system, a review of the great successes of non-violent political change, the many reasons why it is no longer possible, in a nuclear-armed world, to persist in war, nor with "dreams of empire" given that the peoples of the world have the passion for self preservation and the power to achieve their own governance. This is a very important book that will engage us into a dialogue of peace testimony that we must periodically, if not constantly, renew, and also give us the courage to form an abolition movement.

Participants will decide on the 9th whether follow-up discussion(s) will be held. All are welcome!

Aleinu

by Rabbi Jack Reimer

We cannot merely pray to God to end war; for the world was made in such a way that we must find our own path of peace within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to God to root out our prejudices; for we already have eyes with which to see the good in all people if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation; for we already have the resources with which to feed the entire world if we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to God to end despair; for we already have the power to clear away slums and to give hope if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end disease; for we already have great minds with which to search out cures and healings if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore, we pray instead for strength, determination, and willpower, to do instead of merely to pray, to become instead of merely to wish; that our world may be safe, and that our lives may be blessed.

New Years Eve Gathering

Friday, December 31, 6 p.m.

Let's join together in a potluck supper followed by a candlelight Meeting for Worship. All are welcome to come and celebrate the spirit and mark the beginning of a new year in this special way.

Ministry & Counsel Report

Monthly Meeting for Business, November 21, 2004

Discussion on Vocal Ministry

The second hour conversation on vocal ministry (October 24) was well attended and well received. Thanks to facilitators Pete Haviland and Jerry Wood. Among the many good thoughts expressed were:

What is understood as "preparation" for Meeting for Worship (Do Friends keep silence? Pray? Meditate? Read? How often?)

It is helpful to spend time together outside of Meeting so that we come to know what we have in common. Second hour conversations are appreciated as opportunities to share at a meaningful level.

Quarterly Meeting M&C

We welcomed approximately 14 Ministry & Counsel members from other Meetings in Vassalboro Quarter to Quarterly Meeting Ministry & Counsel on Friday, November 5. We shared concerns for bridging the divide between Christian conservatives and ourselves. We planned visitations to other Meetings and spoke of ways to support our young people, such as helping them have their own meetings for business.

Visioning Session

Bill Spock visited our November meeting to help plan the Visioning session on the 14th. He has helped us in many ways and we thank him. At the session, twenty-four Friends pooled their ideas about the future of the Meeting. Notes were carefully taken, and we have come up with a summary and an outline. We ask that the Meeting guide us as to next steps.

Memorial Minute

We have a minute in memory of Ruth Kaltenbach to submit to the Meeting for approval.

Reading of Queries

We have revisited the question of reading Queries aloud during Meeting for Worship. We'd like to refer the following questions to Monthly Meeting:

Is the reading of Queries aloud during Meeting for Worship an appropriate part of an unprogrammed meeting?

Do Friends want to consider having Queries read at another time, perhaps slightly removed from Meeting for Worship?

Meetinghouse Housekeeping

It has been brought to our attention that there is uncertainty about various responsibilities, such as keeping the kitchen clean and supplied and keeping the meetinghouse clean. Since we are not inclined to cover these matters in detail in the upcoming new edition of the Meeting Handbook, we recommend that Meeting for Business develop an independent set of job descriptions.

People To People Needs a New Start

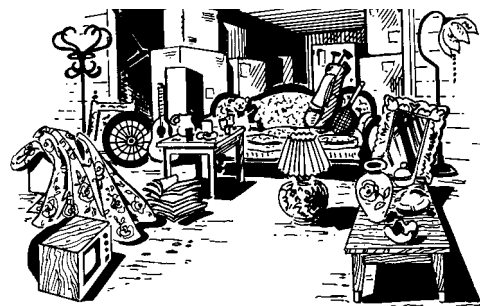
by Gretchen Hull

People to People began in the early 1970s, born from a concern of Midcoast Friends Meeting for those in need in Lincoln County. The first clothing exchange ran from the Dorothy Billings House on Vine Street in Damariscotta, with the help of members Lorraine Schmidt, Nancy Booth, and others. After several years it moved to the basement of the Baptist church where it has been located for almost thirty years. Each week for all those years, clothing and household goods have been gratefully received, then sorted and arranged according to size and season. The doors are open one morning a week.

The board of People to People was made up of representatives from many of the area churches that contributed both time and funding. People to People became an accepted institution in the area, and people came from every town in Lincoln County to partake of its services. Special care was taken to assure a supply of blankets and warm clothes for families who lost their homes to fire, and boxes of clean baby clothes and equipment were a top priority. Each Christmas a magnificent party was held, where the best of the used toys and trinkets were polished up to be used as gifts.

Eventually, its open hours were extended to one afternoon and one evening. This all-volunteer group now serves all of Lincoln County and beyond. People to People has carried on for many years, depending on its very able volunteer workers, but little by little, the board itself became less active and began to shrink in size. This year the organization is facing a new challenge—it must leave the Baptist church and find a new home, hopefully within the Damariscotta downtown area, where it has been so long. At this time, a major effort is being made to once again bring area churches together to support People to People in a revitalization of the organization.

On Thursday, January 13, at 4 p.m., there will be a gathering of people from many churches at the Baptist church in Damariscotta to help create a revitalized People to People organization. Please consider coming or offering help. For more information, contact Gretchen Hull, 563-5416, rivers@lincoln.midcoast.com.



Peace & Social Concerns Committee Report

November 11, 2004, 4 p.m.

by Carmen Lavertu and P&SC clerk Holly Baldwin

Gretchen Hull reported on peace activities in Maine: meetings in Portland and Rockland and people she has been in contact with. She is led to organize a Peace & Justice group in Lincoln County (CONA is different and supportive).

Linda Coté-Small reported on Presence for Peace, an open-to-the-public program she gave in October on how we live peace in our lives. A small but powerful group of about 14 people attended the meeting, including 3 people from a church in Jefferson who had been studying *The Peace Book: 108 Simple Ways to Create a More Peaceful World* by Louise Diamond. All participants indicated the need to continue having regular gatherings, but no further date has been set. We are waiting to see the outcome of the new peace groups bubbling up in the Damariscotta area before we chart our course.

Linda attended a meeting in Edgecomb of people who want to promote the positive energy of the peace movement and to do visioning in regard to our government. They are meeting again within a week and have circulated a flyer invitation with the title "One America." They feel that the state of Maine is a good place to launch a peace movement at this time. Linda and Gretchen will contact their groups and see if they can meet together on the same night, probably at the meetinghouse.

People to People

This organization was founded by Midcoast Meeting, and Gretchen is on the board. There are several problems with the organization at this time. The office has to move out of Baptist church, and they are hoping for a place in a municipal building. The service has not been well managed for several years, and the board also needs good leadership. Not all the churches originally involved in this ecumenical project are currently active. The public need is very great. The center is open two days a week; the volunteer staff are aging and not doing as much as previously. The major activities are the Thanksgiving baskets and the clothing exchange.

People to People was originally launched by Midcoast Monthly Meeting. What are Friends willing to do now, especially in fund raising and organizational support? A major effort is needed to inject new energy for reorganization, and new volunteers are needed to dispel discouragement among those who remain. All area churches need to be contacted. The location move could be occasion for renewal.

Linda Coté-Small is willing to go to the meetings and make calls to the churches. Nancy Booth is willing to notify the newspapers and contact some people she knows in the community. Holly Baldwin will make a poster to recruit helpers. Gretchen will find out when

the meeting is to be held and will let us all know.

Bridges for Peace

Bridges are starting again. Sunday noon to 1. Gretchen continues to coordinate this project. In addition she has planned a movie series on Islam through January and February to be held at Skidompha Library.

Quaker Concern with the Wabanaki People

Ernie Foust came with a request from Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP) for Monthly Meeting support. The Maine Inter-Tribal State Commission (MITSC) is now at a serious impasse: Tribal representatives did not come to last meeting. The purpose of the Wabanaki Schools Project is to support the program to teach the history and culture of the Wabanakis.

Diana Skully, past executive director of MITSC, has a grant to produce a document on the work of the Maine Inter-Tribal State Commission. In addition to that, efforts are underway to have the tribal elders and other supplement the existing history. The new material will come from the chiefs and elders. The current edition now has a CD and bibliography added to it. Copies are available from AFSC or FSG bookstore. We started to develop a plan to distribute the book, to raise funds in the Meeting, and to enlist volunteers to go the schools. Ernie has materials on how to introduce the book to teachers. A syllabus is being developed at University of Maine for all levels. We will raise this concern at our monthly business meeting. We also suggest that the Library Committee obtain one or more copies for the Meeting. Post Business Meeting: P&SC will check with AFSC, etc., to see if a smaller supplement and CD are available to those who have the largely intact original version. P&SC will compile a list of schools/districts and notify the Meeting of which districts need to be contacted.

The Food Pantry

Nancy Booth has so far collected \$75 with more donations still coming in. This will be very welcome at the Food Pantry, as need is great.



Short Summary of Visioning Session 11/14/2004

At the November Meeting for Business we were led through a brief summary of the recent visioning session in the form of key words and phrases. The following is the same summary in narrative form.

Four main ideas were expressed at the visioning session:

- 1) We sense a core of centering strength in the Meeting; we cherish it and want to care for it in the future;
- 2) We are ready for a more open and broader view of our surroundings;
- 3) We feel the need of a Meeting-wide project that goes beyond ourselves;
- 4) We want to increase our focus on the young.

Here is a restatement of the above 4 main ideas, including sub-themes and examples.

- 1) The core of centering strength we find at Meeting is largely the result of worshipping silently together. We cherish it for the balance of spiritual and temporal life that it encourages in us. We also cherish a feeling of belonging with warm and welcoming people. It fosters within us a commitment to the Meeting despite the distances involved. Especially in times of trouble we feel embraced by the caring support of the Meeting. We sense here an unusual willingness to listen deeply, and we sense support for our individual spiritual growth. The place comforts us; we welcome its simplicity, its use of natural materials, and its sense of calm.
- 2) We would like to open and broaden our view of the outside world. In general we want more vitality; specifically we want to become a timely, vital Quaker community from Belfast to Brunswick. We want to change, but thoughtfully, prayerfully, toward having more people, more activity, and more use of the meetinghouse and grounds. Examples include developing a peace center, modeling a sus-

The Advices

Friends are advised to consider our possessions as God's gifts, entrusted to us for responsible use. Let us free our time and our abilities to be able to follow the leadings of the Spirit. Let us cherish the beauty and variety of the world. Friends are urged to speak out boldly against the destruction of the world's resources and the difficulties that destruction prepares for the future generations. Let us guard against waste and resist our extravagant consumption, which contributes to inequities and impoverishment of life in our own and other societies. Let us show a loving consideration for all God's creatures. Let kindness know no limits.

tainable environment with the aim of becoming self-sufficient, and cooperating on programs with other churches and groups. We remember the joy of working together while we were building the meetinghouse and would like to find it again. We look forward to the excitement and meaningfulness of being deeply involved in a cause and of interacting beyond the Meeting.

- 3) A Meeting-wide project that goes beyond ourselves could generate valuable energy and attract more people. We are not of one mind as to whether increased activity must precede expansion of the building.
- 4) We want to increase our attention to young people. We would expand our children's program so as to draw more young families from the area. The program would model Quaker values, specifically the value of service. Often we would use an intergenerational approach. We would also give more support to young adults.

Note: Please let us know your views on how we should implement these main ideas. Letters to the editor are encouraged.

Upcoming Events at Woolman Hill

Need a stimulating getaway or change from your usual routine? Looking to ward off cabin fever or take a break after the holidays? Woolman Hill is a Quaker retreat center in western Massachusetts that offers an ongoing schedule of interesting programs. Look for blue, green, lavender, and orange fliers on the meetinghouse bulletin board or visit www.woolmanhill.org for details on these and other Woolman Hill retreats and workshops.

12/30/04 to 1/1/05 Year End Stillness, led by Tom Antonik

1/21-23 From Earth Charter to Constructive Program: Translating Global Vision Into Local Action, led by Joanne Sheehan, John Humphries, and Allie Perry

2/11-13 Journaling our Relationships, led by Molly Duplisea-Palmer

2/18-20 Art and Spirituality for Friends, led by Arthur Fink

The word of God hidden in the heart is a stubborn voice to suppress.

—Billy Graham

tering is the tool Friends use to get past these distractions.

To “center” means to focus one’s awareness upon the presence of Christ. Centering allows all the distracting concerns to slip into the background while thoughts and impressions of Christ are allowed to fill one’s mind. Many people find that silent prayer, reading from the Bible, or reading a hymn from the hymnal at the beginning of unprogrammed worship focuses their attention on Christ’s presence in a way that centers them.

Gathering

In Quaker terminology a “gathered” meeting for worship is one in which there is a sense of being connected with other worshippers and centered with them in the awareness of Christ’s presence. Being gathered speaks of being aware of a spiritual unity among those in worship and a mutual participation in the life and teaching of Christ.

It is sometimes easiest to recognize when a meeting is not gathered; such a meeting carries a sense of scatteredness. When a meeting is gathered there is a prevailing sense of direction and/or order in the meeting.

One cooperates in the process of gathering by including an awareness of the other worshippers in one’s focus upon Christ. Some find it helpful to look around the worship center and, without focusing on any one individual, create a sense or feeling of cooperating with them in the venture of worship.

Ministry

The silence of unprogrammed worship is not empty silence. During the silence there are heroic things happening. The spirit of Christ is gently nudging each person in worship toward a central truth. The gathered meeting is the way of discerning that truth, and ministry is the way that truth breaks the silence and is acknowledged.

Occasionally one feels nudged by Christ’s spirit to stand and speak out of the silence. Ideally such vocal ministry explains or enlarges upon the truth that God’s spirit has revealed in the hearts of the worshippers. Such ministry is powerful and helpful. Occasionally vocal ministry will seem to “clash” or will seem in disharmony with the sense of direction one feels in worship. When that happens, Friends learn to put such ministry aside and to refocus on the inward presence of Christ.

Exercise

Often the ministry, either vocal or inward, will engage one’s spirit, drawing one to some act of obedience such as repentance of sin, a deeper commitment, or embracing a new truth. Such leadings are sometimes experienced individually and sometimes by the whole assembly. This sense of being thus engaged is the “exercise” of God’s spirit. It is in this exercise that lives are

transformed, Friends are called to acts of ministry, evil or self-destructive behavior is exposed or condemned, and the life of obedience and spiritual maturity moves a step forward. This is the “work” of worship and the fruit of corporate attention to the voice of Christ.

Even those Friends who are most experienced in worship often question their leadings to speak out of the silence in worship. A flow chart offering guidance in discerning whether to speak in worship or to remain silent will appear in the next issue of the newsletter. In the end, however, each worshipper is encouraged to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit as he or she experiences it.



Gordon Stein

8/13/1943 ~ 11/20/2004

Longtime friend and occassional attender of Midcoast Meeting Gordon “Spike” Stein of Litchfield died unexpectedly of a heart attack on November 20, 2004, enjoying the beauty and magic of life while hiking with his beloved wife, Freda, in Bradbury State Park.

Spike was born August 13, 1943 in Montana. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame and received a law degree from the University of Seattle Law School. He served as a VISTA attorney in Alaska before moving to Maine to work for Pine Tree Legal Services. He has practiced law in Hallowell and, over the past seventeen years, in Damariscotta with his partner, Jim Gallagher, at the firm of Gallagher and Stein.

Spike’s passion for life and the wonder of existence was not contained within him. It flowed freely, was shared widely, and found expression in everything he did. Whether building a walking path through the woods, growing immense vegetables, surf-kayaking big waves in Hawaii, riding a water-ski bike straight to the bottom of a lake, or building a bridge to nowhere, Spike saw grand potential in every idea and seized each project with zeal and his own special brand of grace. The story of his life is filled with unexpected twists and surprises. Throughout his journey Spike greeted every challenge as an opportunity and faced each morning with eternal optimism. Spike enriched our world with his love and energy. He will be deeply missed and always remembered.

He is survived by his wife, Freda Bernotavicz; three children; a sister and brother; and several grandchildren and stepchildren. A celebration of his life will be held at Maple Hill Farm in Hallowell on Saturday, December 11, 2004, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. All are welcome to attend. Donations may be made in Gordon’s name to the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), PO Box 170, Unity, Maine, 04988 or online at www.mofga.org.

Unprogrammed Worship

“Friendly” Suggestions for Making Sense Out of the Silence of Unprogrammed Worship

Found in the pews at Reedwood Friends Church, Portland, Oregon,
then found by Sally and Jerry Wood at Burlington, Vermont.

HELP! What is supposed to happen during the silence of unprogrammed worship? Is there something I should be doing? How does one listen for God’s voice? How does one know when and whether to speak? How can I get the most out of this time of worship?

These are wonderful questions to be asking! They reflect a desire to learn and grow and authentically encounter Christ in times of unprogrammed worship. This desire is often the drawing of one’s heart toward the inward presence of Christ. The one who is faithful to pursue such a drawing is seldom disappointed.

Worship after the manner of Friends is a group exercise rather than an individual experience. The quality of worship depends on the faithfulness of those gathered to share in their openness to God’s spirit and to obey leadings as God speaks. Since such worship is a learned faculty, Friends approach worship with a sense of sharing in a mutual quest for an authentic and powerful experience of God.

At the center of Friends worship is the core belief in Jesus Christ as “present teacher.” That means a belief that Christ is present with worshippers to teach, lead,

and reveal truth. Terms such as “the inward light,” the “light of Christ,” “that of God within,” and the “Holy Spirit” refer to that presence of Christ as teacher.

The task of Friends worship is to “mind the light,” which means to focus on Christ, the inward teacher, being careful to distinguish between the insights that come from Christ and those generated from one’s own thinking and feelings. Since this task is not an easy one, Friends enter worship with a sense of humility and tolerance of one another.

Worship after the manner of Friends flows through four stages: centering, gathering, ministry, and exercise. These stages are not, of course, divided equally in time, nor are they acknowledged in the meeting, but over time one can learn to be aware of each stage.

Centering

Most of us come to worship with a lot on our minds. It is natural that during periods of silence our minds turn to these personal concerns, creating “clutter” or distractions that tend to hinder worship. The act of cen-

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Midcoast Meeting of Friends
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