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# THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

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## Convincement Stories

*During Ohio Yearly Meeting sessions in 2015 and 2016, evening presentations featured Friends' accounts of their convincement. The stories which follow are drawn from these presentations.*

My mother made it a point to explain why Friends practiced particular and often peculiar ways separate from other denominations and the culture at large.

It seemed that I was given ability to understand and cherish Christ's teachings and Friends ways as I matured. Even when my human nature struggled with temptations (and still does), the Wisdom of Scripture and of Friends writings filled me with peace. Even though those men and women lived hundreds and thousands of years ago, their teaching appeared relevant.

After many years of being in a place of knowing and believing that Truth, during my late 20's I was suddenly and unexpectedly given a motion to be used as a vessel to speak Truth in Love.

This unexpected development occurred during worship in a large General gathering of Conservative Friends in West Grove Meeting, at Snow Camp, North Carolina. Even though my nature is to be backward, not wanting to speak before a crowd, Jesus gave me words to speak during waiting worship, at a time He appointed. When this first happened I waited, never before having experienced this strong prompting of the Holy Spirit to speak in meeting. When I finally stood in obedience my throat was so tight I could only sob the words. In spite of the ineloquence, afterward I felt a wonderful lightness of spirit.

That event was pivotal in my life, wherein I was shown that God, by His Spirit is truly present. I need only to wait on His anointing, that the Power be through Him.

- Nancy Hawkins  
Member of Middleton Monthly Meeting

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* - Proverbs 22:6

I was raised in a home where each day the love of God was felt and known. God-fearing parents, where we returned thanks before our meals and the Bible was read every night before bed. I remember one First Day when I was probably six or seven, Daddy left for meeting without me because I hadn't gotten ready as I should have. I ran outside and raised such a ruckus he turned around and came back for me. I remember him saying, "probably when thee's old enough thee won't want to go." That turned out to be mostly true for I didn't attend meeting much for several years.

When I was approaching my eighteenth birthday, I was asked by Kenneth Morse and I think my Uncle Richard Hall, whether I was going to sign up to be a conscientious objector. I told them I didn't feel I was supposed to and that I trusted that God would have his will for my life. I did not doubt at all that he would keep me in his care.

Little did I know the many prayers that were being lifted up for me, that in the lottery system, which was being used by the armed forces at that time, the number that was drawn for me was well above any that would ever be drawn. Those prayers had been answered and God's will for my life had been held in his hands. I still wasn't following God and hadn't given my life to him, personally, believing I was in control, not realizing God was right there beside me all along.

My wife and I started attending an independent church called Mt. Zion, around 1995 and it was a short time later I asked God to forgive me, to come into my life and create in me a new creature through his son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life for me. I didn't feel any different and it left me wondering, why? But God had a plan. He used the sickness of my father, who passed in 1999 and my mother three years later in 2002 to increase my faith and to understand that my acceptance of Christ would be an ongoing baptism of faith, God's love, and tender mercies.

My wife stopped attending church and after a time of sharing Mt. Zion and Chestnut Ridge Meeting my sister, Evelyn, encouraged me to spend more time at Chestnut Ridge which I felt like I should do, so it wasn't long till Chestnut Ridge Meeting was where I felt I should be. After many years of not being an active part of the Ohio Yearly Meeting and the Conservative Friends I had finally returned to the place I felt God wanted me to be. So many years of not sharing in the Friends meeting, God already had a plan in place. He used the many faces of the Ohio Yearly Meeting to take me under their wings and to teach, encourage, and, with full faithfulness in our Heavenly Father, lead me down the path of gracious love and mercy he prepares for those who put their trust in him, fully. "O bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me."

God's day of visitation didn't pass me by. He didn't give up on this froward and perverse person but through the perfect gift of his son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life for all of us, he brought me into the fold. I was enabled to "condescend on that footstool at Jesus' feet" and to be lifted up in his everlasting arms.

It was the teaching of those tender years of my life, I assuredly feel, that brought me back to the

*continued on page 3*

## Worship Groups

These groups practice waiting worship in the manner of Conservative Friends. It is best to make contact before making plans, as their schedules need to be adjusted to accommodate their regular participants. For worship at OYM monthly meetings see [www.ohiょearlymeeting.org](http://www.ohiょearlymeeting.org)

Meeting	Location	Contact Person	Contact Information
Friends of Jesus Fellowship	Washington, DC	Micah Bales	316-210-6224 micahbales@gmail.com dcmetro.fojf.org
Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ	Evanston, Illinois (near Chicago)	Kevin McMurtrey	kevinmcmurtrey@gmail.com
Friends in Christ	Harrisville, Michigan	Kimberly Anne Makela	plainquakers@gmail.com www.plainquakers.org
Goshen Meeting	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 620688; Bookseeker @blueyonder.co.uk www.plainquakers.org
Lubbock Friends Meeting	Grace Presbyterian Church Building, Lubbock, Texas	Sara Scribner	sarabscribner@aol.com meeting is at 4820 W. 19th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79407
One in Christ	15 <sup>th</sup> St. Meeting House, NYC	Brian Doherty	212-279-6200 brianj.doherty@verizon.net
Midlands Quakers	Stonebroom, Derbyshire, UK	Allistair Lomax	UK # 01773-875962 ripleychristianquakers@hotmail.co.uk weekly online meeting, First Days, 10:30 AM
Uxbridge Worship Group	Corner of Routes 98 and 146A, Uxbridge MA	Connie Bair-Thompson	First Days, 9:00 AM
Whittier Worship Group	Whittier, California	Kim Palmer	kimpalmer11@yahoo.com

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The editor welcomes articles for publication, those written recently as well as excerpts from earlier Friends' writings.

## Convincement Stories, *continued from page 1*

Society of Friends Conservative (the OYM) and the truth we seek after as we continue to "Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

- Burton Doudna

Member of Chestnut Ridge Monthly Meeting

I started out in Illinois. I was raised a Methodist. We lived one city block from the Methodist Church, and we went to Sunday School every week unless we had a note from the doctor. My bedtime stories were from the Scriptures: Mom read through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and started over. I don't really know how many times she went through the Bible that way.

I turned 18 during the Vietnam conflict, while there was an active military draft. I knew without question that killing was wrong, so I filed as a conscientious objector (CO). My small town draft board had not had to deal with a CO since World War II, and was startled by my filing. They denied it initially. I appealed, with only minimal support from the Methodists, who officially supported the individual's decision on this subject, whatever it might be. My father was a World War II Marine, and my mother had previously been married to an Army Air Corps flier who died in the war. I had little or no support from my family. Nonetheless, through the appeal process, I was given the words to say at each moment, and the Board eventually granted my CO status.

Because I hoped to attend university in Michigan, I relocated, found a job at a state psychiatric hospital, and volunteered to perform my alternate service. The law required two years; in the end I stayed on the job for eight years. Throughout this process, I studiously remained a Methodist.

In time, I came to realize that I was a very small minority among Methodists, most of who believed in "just war." I began to look about for a denomination where I would be a better fit. It chanced that I knew the scholar, Phillips Moulton, and he invited me to attend his Friends meeting. On my first experience of unprogrammed worship, I knew I had found the place where I belonged. I remained in this very liberal, universalist meeting for several years, with decreasing comfort as they avoided use of Scripture, and avoided mention of Jesus.

I made contact with Ohio Yearly Meeting through my acquaintance with Scott Savage and Seth Hinshaw. I became an affiliate member and set about forming a worship group in Flint, MI where I lived. The years have passed since, and the worship group is now Crossroads Monthly Meeting. I am firmly convinced that I have found my spiritual home, and I am grateful to Ohio Yearly Meeting for receiving me.

- Phil Helms

Member of Crossroads Monthly Meeting

## Shake Before Opening

Most of us experience an internal struggle before participating in vocal ministry. The shy child within us can hold us back. I have the opposite problem. My child is much too eager, like a student who calls out to the teacher to be chosen before being sure that the answer is ready.

For this reason, I was particularly cautious when I sensed a leading to carry a message beyond my own meeting community. At first, my caution prevailed, but the leading grew into an urging that would not let me go. At times it seemed insistent, even impatient. It is odd that at times like this we will debate with our Caller. My argument to myself was that this sort of thing requires a clearness committee. I might have had a point, if I had actually requested such a committee. But I did not, and the urging continued and strengthened, until I found myself visiting meetings without the discernment of other Friends. I had even established a monthly visiting routine by the time I requested a committee, and several months had passed before we finally gathered.

Our meeting is very small, so the size of my clearness committee reflected this. Only two Friends were available to help discern if my calling was true. Yet I found their wisdom compelling. They saw some authenticity in the fact that the urging had continued over a long period of time. After silent consideration, the committee felt it right that I should continue in my travels. It was then that a member of the committee did what is obvious in hindsight. He grabbed a copy of Faith and Practice and looked up the procedure for traveling in the ministry. I still hesitate to use this label for my visits. Our heritage is rich with traveling ministers: John Woolman, Elias Hicks, and, of course, George Fox. For many years a significant population of traveling ministers helped our Religious Society along its spiritual path. It does not seem right to consider myself part of this legacy. But it did seem appropriate to consult what is still called our "Book of Christian Discipline." In it, we found that a traveling minute should be drawn up and considered for approval by the meeting. This would be presented to the clerk or other appropriate Friend at the meeting visited. It was also advised that a companion travel with me. I have been blessed with three Friends who have taken turns accompanying me in my visits to meetings in the Philadelphia area.

To understand the message that I feel I am to share, it is best to understand my spiritual path. I grew up in Woodbury (N.J.) Meeting in Salem Quarter. It is odd to remember those years as a young Quaker. I knew that my "church" was unusual. I knew that other places of worship had fancy trimmings such as stained glass windows. I knew that church buildings would have a cross or crucifix placed in a central location. But my

*continued on page 4*

*continued from page 3*

parents explained to me that just because there was no cross in our meetinghouse, it did not mean that Christ was not present in our midst. This was typical of the environment of my youth. We did not frequently speak of Jesus, or Christ. But our Christian roots were evident, even to children. My father taught me First-day school and tried to get me to memorize the names of the books of the Bible. He also read me stories from Scripture and offered a critical eye while doing so. Above all, continuing revelation was emphasized, and I was urged to listen in the silence for that "still, small voice" and be ready to hear the voice of God through vocal ministry.

I must say that I was proud of being a Quaker. This pride only grew during the Vietnam era. I felt I was part of one of the few denominations that was not schizophrenic with respect to war. We did not have to reconcile God and country. Christian soldiers were not to join an army of violence. It was clear that God wanted us to love our enemies and do good to those who hated us. And, of course, in those days peace was fashionable! Unfortunately, as the years went by the word "peace" was used more and the word Christ less. I must admit that I did not notice the change.

In my late 20s, I met the woman who would be my partner in life. I am ever thankful that Penny felt ready to attend meeting with me, and we became a regular pair at Woodbury. Like many new to Quakerism, Penny had many questions. Chief among them was the role that Christ played in our religion. I felt comfortable in assuring her that while not all Friends were Christocentric, deeply committed Christians played a key role in the life of the meeting. I did not realize it at the time, but this applied more to the meeting of my youth than the community that welcomed her in the late 1970s. Although she became involved, at times she also felt a disconnect. More often than not, when someone invoked the name Christ, it was to proclaim loudly that he was not divine, but just a man. This gave Penny a sense that Friends would not be so welcoming if they knew what was in her heart.

Fortunately, this disconnect played little role in our deepening love, and in 1981 we were married under the care of the meeting. The meeting was good to us, and our family grew alongside several other young families. In time, Penny felt it right to join, and she was accepted into membership. Our two sons grew up in the meeting.

Looking back, I see this period in my life as spiritually calm. I felt I understood my relationship to God. Worshiping each week in the meeting that I was born into was a central part of that relationship. I had little doubt that I would stay there my whole life and be buried with my father and grandmother in the Woodbury Meeting graveyard.

Recently, Penny had prepared for me a breakfast to eat in the car on my way to work. Driving down

the road I glanced at the small bottle of orange juice she had included. Some sediment had settled to the bottom. There were instructions printed on the bottle that said, "Shake before opening." After 40 years of living in South Jersey, my life was to be shaken.

During the late '80s and early '90s "corporate America" was experiencing a wave of buyouts and consolidations. For many years the company I worked for had its corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh. In 1993 I was informed that my job was moving to the corporate center. I was invited to join it. The economy was such that I dared not decline. In Eighth Month Penny and I, our two small sons, and two dogs left our small South Jersey farmhouse for a suburban development north of Pittsburgh.

The obvious meeting for us to attend was Pittsburgh Meeting. For about half a year we did just that. Pittsburgh is an excellent meeting, but a few things prevented us from making a connection. The location in the city seemed awkward for our family. Parking was not easy, especially in the snow. The meeting was very large, and our kids seemed to get lost in the shuffle. Some Friends were impressed when our youngest preferred to stay with us through meeting for worship rather than participate in First-day school. Little did they know that it was not the Silence that drew him, but the hubbub of the class that frightened him. And Penny's struggle with her Quaker identity did not improve. If anything, Pittsburgh seemed less inviting to a Friend with a Christian point of view.

For these reasons, a search began for other meetings. After a few phone calls Middleton Meeting in Columbiana, Ohio, was suggested. Middleton is a part of Ohio (Conservative) Yearly Meeting and was quite a distance away. I must admit that I was a little hesitant. I knew that this yearly meeting was firmly Christian. To me, that meant narrow-mindedness and proselytizing. I agreed to go, but inside I was readying myself with a host of arguments to rebuff the onslaught that was sure to come.

For some reason, I have little memory of the first time we walked into the Middleton meetinghouse. I know that we were greeted by many warm smiles and that we presented a letter of introduction to the clerk. But this is not an unusual experience among Friends. I do remember how easily a silence formed when worship began. This silence was deeply comforting and homelike. In that worship I felt myself drawn to Paul's essay on Love in I Corinthians, Chapter 13. I do not remember if I had brought my Bible, or if there was one on the bench beside me. But I found myself standing and reading that essay. These words from Scripture settled easily into the meeting, and I was comfortable that I had done as I was supposed to do. However, I was slightly taken aback when an elderly Friend knelt and prayed soon after the reading. The prayer was heartfelt, the speaker was almost in tears. His prayer

*continued on page 5*

*continued from page 4*

carried me and the meeting before the Almighty. We became a gathered meeting.

The welcoming atmosphere did not dissipate as we continued to attend Middleton. Meeting for worship never failed to ease into a deep and powerful silence. I felt a strength in worship that I had not felt since childhood. I had not noticed that it was missing. This is not to suggest that worship in Middleton is superior to worship elsewhere. But it spoke to my condition in a way that I could not have predicted, and still do not understand.

One First Day I felt that I should speak out of the Silence. It seemed I was asked to point out that while we can wander away from God, God does not leave us. I realized before I stood that I might confess that I am one of those who wanders. But when I came to that moment of confession, I found myself racked with sobs and could barely speak the words. At the rise of that meeting, the old and wrinkled farmer sitting next to me did not shake my hand, but embraced me.

It is not surprising that First-day school was held with a firm Christian perspective, but all the arguments I had prepared to defend my understanding of God were never used. Instead, it was I that turned. Eventually I came to an understanding that the best way for me to be close to God was to worship in the name of Christ. Ironically, all those old arguments still lie in my head. I can easily recall them and explain why worshiping in anyone's name is imposing preconceived notions on God. Nevertheless, I have found Christ at the center. Cerebral arguments are not helpful.

My spiritual life deepened and I came to other truths. Understanding that Christ was and is divine was a powerful tool. If the Spirit of Love were to take fleshly form and walk among us, would it not call us to love our neighbor and our enemy, to do good to those who hate us and spitefully use us? Would it not heal us, and remind us of God's love? Would we not be invited into the Kingdom of God? And if this Word of God were publicly humiliated and put to death, would it not arise? In my heart, I know that that Love could pass through this trial and resurrect. I have found it most profitable to embrace a history that actually saw this event.

Part of me still finds it unreal that I would publicly declare myself to be Christian. My deepest understandings have been shaken. But the shaking was followed by opening.

While my spiritual life was in full blossom, I was fairly unhappy at work. In the late 1990s the economic picture improved, and a new position was offered to me in the Philadelphia area. It was difficult to uproot the family again, but my discomfort with my job was very great. Penny was concerned about moving away from the place that had been such an asset to our spiritual lives. There was also a fear that (despite the best of intentions) the atmosphere in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is not always conducive to Friends with a

Christian understanding of God. But we stepped out in faith. We searched for a new home in a good school district. The choice of a monthly meeting was not a factor as we looked. There are times when the hand of God is hard to ignore. We ended up in a house half a mile from Marlborough (Pa.) Meeting. Marlborough is known for its beautiful setting in Chester County. But its spiritual orientation also reminds one more of Ohio Conservative than Philadelphia.

It was after we had moved back to the Delaware Valley that Penny and I heard another calling. The overwhelming majority of Ohio Conservative Friends have laid aside plain dress. Yet there are still a few who believe that their clothing should reflect the simplicity of Quaker gray. Our journey to plain dress is a story unto itself. But the fact is that this is now our condition.

The Christocentric approach has been a tremendous asset to my spiritual life. It seems unlikely that I would have found this path outside of Ohio Conservative. It might have been possible in the meeting of my youth, but the current state of the Religious Society does not encourage this view of God. It is not unreasonable to think that others could profit from the inward Christ as I have. I feel led to do what I can to make the way easy for these Friends. But I fear that I will be misunderstood in the process. I fear that the message I have been given to share will be confused with any number of Protestant views of Christianity.

Like George Fox, my understanding of Christ is one I have come to experientially. It stands in stark contrast to the theological representations of Jesus held by organized religions. More importantly I am not called to share my understanding of Christ. Rather, I feel called to remind Friends to sweep away preconceived notions before seeking. We should lay aside both the notions of who God is and notions of who God is not. It is true that we should plunge into the spiritual depths without carrying any words with us. But we should not fear any words that are given to us in those depths.

Our spiritual communities must be supportive of all messages that come out of that experience. Too often we become defensive when we hear the words "Christ Jesus" in vocal ministry. At times these words are tolerated, but if the speaker holds up the Spirit of Christ to be "the way, the truth, and the life," then the tolerance can shift to prejudice. Ironically it is just this sort of prejudice that Friends have historically worked to prevent.

I try to set aside every third First Day of the month for travel. As the appointed day approaches, I often feel the burden of leaving the security of my own community. But each visit has been a fantastic experience. I must admit that there have been several times when my fears of prejudice appeared justified. There have been occasions when a Friend has felt it necessary to labor with me over a message. Fortunately, the over-

*continued on page 6*

*continued from page 5*

whelming number of times I have been warmly welcomed. But the real treasure that I have discovered is a vast diversity of Quaker communities. All have so much in common, yet each is quite distinctive. I have felt a real depth of worship in many places and experienced more gathered meetings than I ever expected.

I am not absolutely certain how many meetings I have visited. I started before my clearness committee met and before a traveling minute had been prepared. It is almost comical with hindsight, but there was a time when I left a copy of my minute with each meeting I visited. This was before I realized that the accepted practice is for the meeting to endorse the minute, if they feel it right. The result is that the number of endorsements on my minute has little connection to the number of my visits. I have been given advice to keep a journal of my travels. This I have tried to do. Reviewing my journal, I would say that I have worshiped with more than 25 different meetings.

My journal bears little resemblance to the traditional journal of a traveling Friend. One difference is that I have fallen into the habit of trying to remember and record what I have been given to say. I understand that early Friends were loath to do this. A message from God is one that should be heard in the experience of worship. However, a few Friends whom I deeply respect record their messages, and I have followed suit. Obviously more than a few words are lost between the time of worship and the time I am able to sit down to try to recollect them. But I have found the experience worthwhile.

It has occurred to me that a reader of this article might be interested in one such message. On Fifth Month 15 last year I visited Germantown Meeting in Philadelphia. It was a particularly powerful experience. Germantown is a large meeting. I would not have guessed that a meeting of that size could be so spiritually led. There was a lot going on, and many messages. Yet the movement of the Spirit was evident to me. I must admit that one Friend was so uncomfortable with my message that she labored mightily with me at the rise of meeting. Even so, I count it as one of my most memorable and positive visits. The following is what I understand God was to have me say:

*Friends, I have a concern that I would like to lay before you today. I hope the tone does not seem harsh, for believe me when I say that it is a concern born of Love.*

*Now, would you say that many or most, or perhaps even all of the Friends gathered in this room today would be ready at a moment's notice to publicly stand and declare for the way of peace? And we would do this, even though, by doing so we might be considered traitors in our own country. We would do this because we know that speaking truth to power is the very essence of U.S. patriotism.*

*But here I think that I have discovered a rather*

*odd thing. For while we have the courage to risk being mistaken for traitors and cowards, for some reason we hesitate to don the title Christian for fear that we might be mistaken for a very narrow and particular Christian theology with which we do not unite. For there are those Christians who feel they must proselytize, and there are those Christians who feel they must dwell on judgement, even hellfire and damnation. While we do not understand this particular theology, and at times I struggle to understand the Christians that profess it, one thing you must say is at least they stand and speak the truth, as they understand it.*

*Why is it, then, that we as Friends cannot speak the truth of Christ, as we know it? For we know that Christ did not come to judge the world. We know that the Spirit of Christ is a loving Spirit, it is a tender Spirit. And we also know that living in the power and the presence of this Spirit takes away the occasion for all wars.*

*Friends, if we are able to reclaim our Christian identity, we would be in a better position to explain to the world that the way of peace is a natural outcome of the teachings of Jesus. We would be better able to point out that if one feels the need to say that Christ is the Way, one must also be prepared to say that peace is the way.*

*But if we cut off our Christian roots, if we hide our Christian identity, we hide these truths even from ourselves.*

*Friends, you are the Light of the world! But no one lights a light and hides it under a bushel.*

*Friends, you are the Salt of the Earth! But if that salt loses its saltiness, if it loses its savor, it is no longer effective because it is no longer used. It is simply laid aside or cast away.*

*I hope it has not been inappropriate for me to have shared this concern with you today. I am ready now that we might return to the silence, where we can seek and find that still, small voice, where we can be strengthened by the warmth and love of the Inner Light. But let us not hesitate to call it the Inner Christ. For in doing so, we may rediscover a bright and shining Quaker jewel that has been so valued by so many Friends for so long.*

My experience at Germantown is representative of my overall experience traveling in the ministry. Some seemed comfortable with my message. Others openly struggled with it. But it was only one message among other Words of God that were spoken that day. I do not know how much others profited from what I said, but I know that I came away deeply enriched both by the silence and the words.

I would urge other Friends to listen carefully to that still, small voice. You may be called to share a message beyond your local community. Even if you do not find this call, consider visitation to other meetings. We may be struggling with numbers, but our founda-

*continued on page 7*

## How Does Truth Prosper among You?

That query – How Does Truth prosper among you? – has been brought forward from the earliest times of the Quaker movement. I was asked to consider it again, in its modern version, in a recent gathering of Friends from many yearly meetings. What do we understand that query to mean? What is Truth?

Truth is not a set of doctrines or individual “truths,” such as “It is good to live simply,” or “Christ is in each of us,” nor can we find the meaning of Truth by attempting to add together all the little “truths” we might identify. Truth, with a capital T, is deeper and more powerful than even the sum of all of them.

Truth is not another word for God. Truth cannot love. Truth cannot encourage us. Truth cannot search us or know us or lead us in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139) Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6) Truth is one aspect of God, an important aspect but not the entirety of the Almighty. Truth stands immutable. And although Truth cannot reach out to us or speak to us, Truth can hold us and carry us on God’s way into spiritual wholeness.

Brian Drayton\* writes that for early Friends, Truth was “a spiritual reality that was ... just as real as [our physical] reality....This Truth was not just a doctrine to be believed with the mind and to be assented to with the mouth – it was a reality to be entered by the one who was ready.” Remembering my childhood in southern Rhode Island, I think of entering Truth as like going swimming off an ocean beach on a day with real but not thundering waves. You feel ready to try, perhaps having learned swimming in a quiet pool. You have changed from your street clothes into a bathing suit, which more clearly exposes your true form to scrutiny but which also frees you from unneeded cumbrances. You’ve heard that ocean swimming is wonderful, and you’ve watched a few friends swimming far out. You gather your courage. You wade in a little way, and soon you meet the breakers. Waves splash around you, push against you, grab at your footing, and sometimes wash foaming over your head. You may panic for a minute: “Help! What do I do now?” But if you keep going, swimming as you know how, suddenly you are out past the breakers, floating safe and free. You notice

the chill of the water, the tingle of salt on your skin and salt’s taste in your mouth. You feel the power of the swells as they lift you up and lower you gently down. You look out at a blue sky and a distant cliff and a white-winged gull sailing by. Maybe you set your foot down on a surprised crab, or a strand of kelp winds itself around your wrist, but the water continues to hold you. You are both excited and at peace.

Brian asserts that the nature of Truth is such that the person who has entered and is now in Truth feels a sense of the divine harmony that holds our universe together, operating on our minds, in our bodies, and in human society. To be in the Truth means that one can – and will – embody inward peace through outward gentleness, tenderness to all creatures, and the right ordering of human society as shown and taught by Jesus. Truth is an experience, sensing and knowing and doing God’s will. When we are in Truth, we are contained in it and carried by it in its swells.

In the human life into which we are born, we bump into conflicts between our own wills and God’s way. When we are in Truth, there is a sense of peace, a different feeling of the flow of time, a new perception of other people. We are, Brian reminds us, turned into a channel of God’s universal love, and that “becomes the chief business of our lives. We long for, and sometimes [we both live in and] reflect in our measure, the beauty of holiness.”

Truth prospering among us has noticeable effects. Friends’ testimonies (including simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality first before God, and other ways of living) began not as a collection of political or social assertions but as a necessary enactment of the Truth in which those Friends stood. When we are in Truth today, our worldview and values are changed. We are drawn to live in and into God’s values, God’s will - as individuals and as a people in the world in which we live. Our lives become one testimony to God’s way and Truth.

- Susan Smith  
Member of Rockingham Monthly Meeting

\* I am indebted to Brian Drayton, and his fine commentary on Truth in *A Language for the Inner Landscape*, for expanding my understanding of Truth. Quotations and many of the ideas here are from that book.



*continued from page 6*

tion is rich and diverse and healthy. We would do well by experiencing as much of it as we can.

- Charles “Chip” Thomas, Jr.

Member, Marlborough Monthly Meeting  
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## **Permanent Answer to All Queries**

***(To Quakers Great and Small)***

If there's one thing we are good at  
Asking questions would be it.  
Mostly of ourselves we ask them,  
"Am I pleasing God yet?"

We don't do this as a fun thing,  
It's not done right until it hurts!  
This might be the foremost reason  
We shall know no peace on earth.

Graciously, our Lord in heaven,  
Looking down on me and thee,  
Gathers us with all compassion  
As a father to his knee,

Nudging our wee hearts toward patience  
Till we finally begin to see  
Any perfection we are granted  
Cometh not from me nor thee.

Evelyn Groves  
Member, Chestnut Ridge Monthly Meeting

## **Reasons for Trials**

1. to see how much we really love God
2. to purify and refine us
3. to teach us how to depend on God
4. to cause us to draw closer to God
5. to give us added Christian attributes (the Fruit of the Spirit—Galatians 5:22)
6. to know God's divine will (e.g. Jonah)
7. for a testimony for the glory of God (e.g. Daniel, Job)

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