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My Journey to this Music

This recording is a new and unusual music endeavor for me. I have been a folk singer much of my adult life, following the traditions of Pete Seeger, Holly Near, and Bernice Johnson Reagon by using song to raise awareness and give heart to the struggle to heal a hurting world. Though I lack musical training, I have been gifted with a strong singing voice, good for uniting large crowds in song! My two previous recordings, *Harmony for Social Justice* and *Come Join the Circle: LessonSongs for Peacemaking*, represent classic "music with a message" songs. As a peace educator working in schools, I have written many songs for children.

The journey that brought me to this endeavor began about ten years ago, when I began to explore the Quaker faith. This came after a number of years of giving up on finding a spiritual home for myself. For a long time my interests pulled me between the inward experiences that came through meditation and dreams and the outward use of my passions and gifts as an educator/activist in the world. In my work for peace and eco- justice over the years, I'd known and greatly respected Friends I'd met, but I didn't know much about the spiritual roots of the faith. I was drawn to the Religious Society of Friends when I learned of the strong elements of mysticism inherent in its faith and practice.

I was thrilled to discover in this Quaker faith a religious tradition, based in primitive Christianity, where inward mystical experience of the Divine Light was grounding and sustenance for the outward work to be done in the world. From their beginning over three hundred years ago, Quakers have honored women's voices equally to men's in matters of the Spirit. I was eager to discover what it was about this tradition that rooted its people so firmly in faith that they risked life, comfort, and security over the centuries to take nonviolent stands against oppression of all kinds.

In the Quaker practice of centered stillness, I began to appreciate the openness to shared revelation that grew out of the silence in Quaker meeting for worship. I also noticed that Friends shared my values for simple living my desire to practice peacemaking. I loved the structures that Quakers had developed to support each other in living out these values. I had indeed found a spiritual home and in time I became a member of a Friends meeting in Cincinnati.

In 2004 I was faced with the threat of losing my job and at a loss for what to do. My local Friends meeting formed a clearness committee for me. Four Quakers met with me and tenderly listened to my struggles. After hearing of my deep spiritual longing, they urged me to meditate daily and suggested I go for a short retreat to Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania. Both suggestions turned out to be blessings. One morning in meditation, I saw an image of a beautifully wrapped ornate Swiss clock in a gift box. I realized it symbolized the "gift of time." That same day I was told that I would no longer have a job. I remembered the clock image and felt comforted and protected. I felt drawn to return to Pendle Hill and at the advice of my spiritual counselor there, I applied for the Minnie Jane Artist in Residence scholarship, which allowed me to become a student at Pendle Hill, where I ultimately stayed for nine months.

Friends in my meeting encouraged and helped me in many ways, including convincing me that I really am an "artist." Their help was essential as I prepared to rent my house and undo all the tangles in my life that needed to be gotten out of the way.

But I was still worried about going so long without a steady income. On the day that the call came from Pendle Hill offering me the scholarship, I still did not see how I could do it. In the midst of that morning's anxiety, the thought came to me that perhaps I could provide some programs in nearby schools to earn extra cash. Within an hour my phone rang—the principal of a school near Philadelphia was inquiring about my CD. She said they'd love to have me do a workshop for their teachers if I were in the neighborhood!

Quakers have a language for these kinds of synchronicities. When we feel called by the Spirit to do something or go somewhere, we call it a "leading." And when things begin to work out to make that leading possible, we call it "way opening." Way continued to open for my leading as it continued to develop.

During my time as Artist in Residence at Pendle Hill I found myself wanting to take advantage of their classes to learn more about spirituality and the Quaker faith. Through studies in Quaker history and rich conversations with fellow students, in particular Quaker historian Gerry Guiton from Australia, I grew to understand and appreciate the roots of the Quaker faith in 17th century England. Rex Ambler's class, "Experiment with Light," introduced a meditation practice based on the writings of George Fox that helped me to experience first hand this early Friend's directives for following the work of the Light within. In a deep listening prayer session, I received a clear message that this Quaker faith was needed in our world, and I was to play a role in helping to make it more known.

In the whole year at Pendle Hill, I only wrote two songs. As Artist in Residence, I felt free to let the songs in my heart find spontaneous voice in group settings, and I started a "Meeting for Singing" on Sunday mornings. Toward the end of my time at Pendle Hill, I met a gifted intuitive, Dr. Darya Fuenches, who told me without knowing anything about me, that she foresaw me singing for Quakers and composing new songs of "Spirit in the world." She strongly encouraged me to keep singing.

Further serendipitous events resulted in my coming back to the Philadelphia area in the fall of 2005 for ten more months. I visited many Quaker meetings and schools, providing song programs and workshops. I also began volunteering as a docent at the historic Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia. Speaking to individuals and large groups of tourists about the Quaker faith and the role that William Penn played in the founding principles of this country seemed in total alignment with the message I'd received in prayer while at Pendle Hill. But doubts plagued me: was it a huge mistake, at my age, to have taken another year away from steady work with regular income? My troubled mind was eased whenever I reviewed a certain quotation of George Fox: *Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit. . . .* I wanted to commit these words to memory, and when I did, a melody came with them. And thus began a practice of turning Quaker passages into chant-like songs.

At first I put these Quaker passages to song as a way to nurture my own spirit. But soon I found myself moved to sing them as vocal ministry, out of the silence of Quaker worship. Friends responded encouragingly, sometimes glad to hear forgotten or unfamiliar passages, sometimes telling me that these song/chants helped them understand the meaning of the words in a deeper way. I began to recognize that by sharing these texts in this way, I could bring alive the core truths and experiences of early Friends. Soon I began selecting quotations that I felt were important for understanding of Quaker spirituality.

In the four years since returning home from Philadelphia, these song/chants have soothed my spirit through intensely difficult times, reminding me of my inner Guide and of "that which is eternal." But they have also provided a basis for presentations to Quaker and other groups about the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends. I have been so happy to share my spiritual beliefs in this way.

In the summer of 2007, I took part in an "unprogrammed retreat" in Barnesville, Ohio, where I had a chance to share these songs in a worshipful atmosphere. The response from both conservative and liberal Friends was enthusiastic, and a committee was formed to support me in this ministry, and to help me think about making a recording.

About a month later, Barabara Mays, the manager of Quaker Press, attended a workshop based on these songs that I led in Richmond, Indiana. Barbara invited me to submit a proposal to the Publications Committee of Friends General Conference for publishing a CD. A musician herself, she had been one of the primary editors of *Worship in Song*, the Quaker hymnal published in 1996 by FGC. Barbara's enthusiasm led the way for this first music CD to be published by Quaker Press.

At each step of the way, the right people and resources have materialized to make this work possible.

The evolution of this recording's creation has clearly been a spiritual leading. I believe I was led by the Spirit, being given what was needed step by step. Words of 18th century Quaker Caroline Fox, wonderfully set to song by Susan Stark, have helped me in the course of following this leading: "Live up to the Light that Thou hast!" And looking back on it now, my story exemplifies much about the best in Quaker process: how an individual's leading is verified, supported, and sustained in a community of Friends. I feel humbled by the generous support I've received and am grateful to be able to play a small role in spreading the wisdom of early Friends out on the wings of song to the world.

The Quotations in this Collection: Four Themes

At some point in my journey of discovering and singing these passages, I realized that the messages seemed to fall into four theme areas. The progression of these four themes relates closely to the process inherent in Quaker spiritual practice. The order of songs on this CD was based in large part on this progression.

First is the act of centering deeply into stillness in order to be able to see and listen, to move beyond thoughts and words (Tracks 1–7). Rex Ambler, a Quaker theologian, writes that Fox did not tell people what to *believe*, but rather what to *do*, to open themselves to the inward Light and the guidance of "the inward Teacher." The first seven quotations, including the prayer of Joan Vokins, all reflect the experience so common in the writings of Christian mystics: the strength and peace that comes from turning over one's will to God and trusting the Light within. Here are rather explicit instructions and advice to Friends for entering into that space beyond words, where deep healing and opening occur. The key is to *wait*, not to *do*. The Light will rise up from within and show what is "out of the Light," what needs healing. Giving up control allows healing to come and paths to open.

The second theme is the experience of the vision, the discovery of the hidden pearl, the Kingdom of God within. Tracks 8–12 all address aspects of the true nature of reality, as perceived by early Friends. This reality was the "Kingdom of -Heaven," available in the here and now, where each one is restored to wholeness and truly becomes "the image of God" (as in Genesis 1:26). Friends' found verification of their experience in the words of Jesus: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." (Luke 17:21) Here is the essence of pure Love, "the eternal Christ Spirit," ever present to all who let themselves be opened. Early Friends spoke frequently of the Truth, and by this they did not mean a doctrinal creed to be believed, but rather this present reality to be experienced. Love is the natural order, the underlying essence of life, and the state of Love is what is eternal. All that is in opposition to it is false and fleeting.

The third theme is about spiritual relationship. Tracks 13–16 reflect how the experience of uniting one's will with God's opens our hearts to each other in new ways, allowing us naturally to live in love and community. Early Friends found that meeting together in stillness fostered tenderness and love for each other, as well as a deeper understanding of the radical teaching of Jesus—that all have a place in the Kingdom of God. Fox preached the early Christian message from Acts 2:4 (re: Joel 2:28), that persons of all ages, genders, and backgrounds have their measure of Light and respective talents to share —not in an apocalyptic future, but in the here and now. Out of this recognition came the vehement stance that women had an equal role to men's in the ministry, allowing for the freedom of women to travel and speak out in large numbers. Community was essential—not only for mutual support through the sufferings of brutal oppression, but also for help in discerning the authenticity of leadings of the Spirit.

Finally, **the fourth theme describes the internal leadings that call us outward into the world**. Tracks 17–21 speak of Quakers' commitment to witness to the Truth in word and action. Individuals often felt directed by the Spirit to undertake specific missions of

service or confrontation to lead others into deeper awareness. Early Friends also adopted certain behaviors in common as witness, such as dropping social customs like removing one's hat in deference to nobility and refusing to pay church tithes or to take loyalty oaths. It was this kind of witness that often led to severe punishment. Outward actions, motivated by the deep inward experience of God's love, are today called "testimonies." While there is no official list of Friends testimonies, ones that are typically mentioned include Peace, Integrity, Equality, Simplicity, and Community.

The words of John Woolman—the one Quaker in this collection not born in seventeenth century England, but in early eighteenth century New Jersey—were included here (track 21) because they reflect so thoroughly the integration of these testimonies. With a gentle, loving spirit, Woolman reached out personally to many slave holders, including other Friends, urging them to free those they held in slavery. He avoided benefitting from the work of slaves in any way. He suffered ridicule for his choice to wear undyed woolen clothing rather than participate in the business of slave-produced cotton and dyes. He witnessed to the Truth he deeply perceived—that lives complicated by excess consumption lead us away from the Light within and create unjust conditions for laborers as well as depleting nature's bounty. This is what plants and nourishes the "seeds of war."

Quakers have been largely known for this last theme: their testimony in the world, evidenced by their strong stance for peace and justice over the centuries. Many people have been attracted to the Religious Society of Friends for this reason. What has been less known are the spiritual roots of this conviction. When asked to become an officer in the army of the Commonwealth against Charles I, Fox referred to the Book of James (4:1–3). He said, "I told them I knew from whence all wars arose, even from the lusts [greed], according to James' doctrine, and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." For early Friends, living in "the virtue of that life and power" meant living in that deep place of connection with the Divine, "the eternal Christ Spirit." When they opened themselves to the Light, they found themselves searched, their temptations exposed and released, and they were filled with a profound sense of inner contentment and peace, in which they felt strengthened to face whatever hardships were dealt as a result of their testimonies to Truth.

The passages in this collection hold a vision for both the inner life and outer witness in the world. These recorded chants are my expression of yearning for that life and witness and they also reflect my attempt to live up to "the measure of Light" that I have been given, trusting in the Divine to do the rest.

The quotations, their sources, and Biblical references

George Fox and other early Friends had an intimate and thorough knowledge of the Bible. Their writings are saturated with biblical language and metaphors. Yet, as Fox explained in many of his writings, the Bible was considered a secondary source of spiritual truth. The primary source was the Light Within or the inward revelation, given directly by the Spirit of Christ. Fox repeatedly asserts that no one can fully understand the Scriptures without being inspired by the same Spirit that enlightened the original writers of them:

> I had no slight esteem of the holy scriptures. They were very precious to me; for I was in that Spirit by which they were given forth; and what the Lord opened in me, I afterwards found was agreeable to them. (See *Journal of George Fox*, cited herein, p. 34.)

This was indeed radical thinking; Fox made it clear that the guidance of the inward Teacher was sufficient to know Truth, and he found that Scriptures confirmed that Truth.

The Bible references in the following quotations refer to phrases, images, or references to biblical passages used by the authors, almost as part of their daily language.

1. Be still and cool in Thy own mind and spirit, from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive God's strength and power from whence life comes, whereby thou wilt receive God's strength, to allay all blusterings, storms, and tempests.

   George Fox, Letter to Elizabeth Claypole (daughter of Oliver Cromwell, 1658), included in *Journal of George Fox*, John L. Nickalls, ed. (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting: 1985 [1694]), p. 346. DQC

2. Ye have no time but this present time, therefore prize your time, for your soul's sake.

   George Fox, "A Letter to Parents" (1652) in T. Canby Jones, *The Power of the Lord Is Over All: The Pastoral Letters of George Fox* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1989), p. 5. DQC

3. Keep within. And when they say, 'Lo[ok] here or lo[ok] there is Christ [Mat 24:23, Luke 17:21], go not forth [Mat 16:24], for Christ is within you [cf. Luke 17:21]. And those who try to draw your minds away from the teaching inside you, are opposed to Christ. For the measure's within, and the light of God is within, and the pearl is within [cf. Mat 13:46], though hidden.

   George Fox, Epistle 19 (1652) in "A Collection Of Many Select And Christian Epistles, Letters And Testimonies" in *Works of George Fox* (Philadelphia: Marcus T. Gould & Isaac T. Hopper, 1831), Vol. 7, p. 27. DQC

4. Art thou in [the] Darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will feed thee more. But stand still, and act not, and wait in patience, Till Light arises out of Darkness and leads thee. [cf. Rom 8:25] DQC

   James Nayler, "Glory to God Almighty" (1659) in *The Works of James Nayler* (Famington, ME: Quaker Heritage Press, 2003 [1716]), Vol. 4, p. 231. QHP

5. Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves, and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts and temptations, Do not think, but submit, and then power comes in. Stand still in that which shows and discovers, and there doth strength immediately come. And stand still in the light, and submit to it, and the other will be hushed and gone, and then content[ment] comes.

   George Fox, Epistle 10 (1652) in *Works*, Vol. 7, p. 20. DQC

6. Lord, give me and mine the comfortable Enjoyment of thy presence forever, and then try us as thou pleasest: Thy preserving Power is all that I desire of thee, and unto thee I commit all, and with thee I leave all; for thou art worthy to dispose of all; and then would Life flow in like a River, to the comforting and strengthening of Soul and Body.

   Joan Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified As Manifested and Revealed in His Faithful Handmaid Joan Vokins*, Oliver Sanson, ed. (London: Thomas Northcott,1691), pp. 32–33.

7. Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running [Rom 9:16], give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee and grow in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life [cf. Mat 19:29], which is God's portion.

   Isaac Penington, "Some Directions to the Panting Soul" in *Works of the Long-Mournful and Sorely-Distressed Isaac Penington* (London: B. Clark, 1681), Vol. 1, p. 347. DQC

8. Oh, love Truth and its Testimony, whether its Witness be to you or against you. Love it, that into my Mother's house you all may come, and into the Chamber of her that conceived me [Song 3:4], where you may embrace and be embraced of my dearly beloved one. Love is his Name, Love is his Nature and Love is his life.

   Sarah Blackborow, *A Visit to the Spirit in Prison* (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658), p. 10. DQC

9. I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I also saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.

   George Fox (1647), *Journal*, p. 19. DQC

10. They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies nor can spirits ever be divided, that love and live in the same Divine Principle, the root and reward of their friendship.

    William Penn, "Some Fruits of Solitude" (1693) in *A Collection of the Works of William Penn* (London: J. Sowle, 1726), Vol. 1, p. 850. DQC

11. The truth is one and the same always, though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the Living God endures forever, and is the same and never changes [Eccl 1:4, 1 Pet 1:23, Heb 13:8].

    Margaret Fell, "Preface to Margaret Fell's Epistles, Written by Herself" (1660?) in *The Life of Margaret Fox, Wife of George Fox, Compiled from Her Own Narrative and Other Sources* (Philadelphia: Friends Association, 1859). QHP

12. Mind that which is eternal, which gathers your hearts together up to the Lord, and lets you see that ye are written in one another's heart. [2 Cor 3:2f]

    George Fox, Epistle 24 (1653), *Works*, Vol. 7, p. 31. DQC

13. Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness and bearing with each other, and forgiving one another and not laying accusations one against another; but praying for each other and helping each other up with a tender hand.

    Isaac Penington, "Letter to Friends in Amersham" (1667) in *Letters of Isaac Penington*, J. Barclay, ed. (London: J. & A. Arch, 1828), p. 139. QHP

14. Let not the sons and daughters, nor the handmaids, be stopped in their prophesying, nor the young men in their visions, nor the old men in their dreams [Joel 2:28f; cf. 1 Th 5:20]. . . . So every one may improve their talents [cf. Mat 25:14–30], every one exercise their gifts, and everyone speak as the spirit gives them utterance [Acts 2:4]. Thus every one may minister, as each [he] hath received the grace, as a good steward to the one [him] that hath given it [him] [1 Pet 4:10]. So that all plants may bud and 'bring forth fruit' to the glory of God [cf. Rom 7:4, e.g.].

    George Fox (1657), *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 345–346. DQC

15. And may not the Spirit of Christ speak in the female as well as in the male? [cf. Joel 2:28f, Gal 3:28] . . . Who is it that dare limit the Holy One of Israel [Psa 78:41]. For the Light is the same in the male and in the female. And it cometh from Christ, through whom the world was made [John 1:3,10]. . . . And who is it that dare stop Christ's mouth?

    George Fox, "Woman Learning in Silence" (1657), *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 109. DQC

16. All meet together everywhere, and in your Meetings wait upon the Lord [Isa 40:31, e.g.] And take heed of forming words, but mind the Power, and know that which is Eternal, which will keep you all in unity [cf. Eph 4;3], walking in the Spirit [Gal 5:16, 25], and will let you see the Lord near you and among you.

    George Fox, Epistle 43 (1653), *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters and Testimonies* (London: T. Sowle, 1698), p. 39. QHP

17. We are a people, that follow after those things that make for peace [Rom 14:19], love and unity. It is our desire that other's feet may walk in the same. We do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contention.

    Margaret Fell, *Declaration and Information from Us the People of God Called Quakers* (1660), p. 7. DQC

18. Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone [1 Jn 5:9/Rom 1:18/Col 4:6]; whereby in them ye may be a blessing and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

    George Fox, 'To Friends in the Ministry' (1656), *Journal*, p. 263. DQC

19. It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world if we understood more about the creation of it. For how could we find the confidence to abuse it, while we should see the Great Creator stare us in the face, in all and every part thereof?

    William Penn, "Some Fruits of Solitude" (1693) in *Collection of Works*, Vol I, p. 821. DQC

20. Peace requires justice. Justice requires law. Law requires government, not only within nations, but also between nations.

    Willliam Penn, "An Essay towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe" (1693) in *Collection of Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 839–848. (nb: These words are paraphrased from Penn's essay, which can be downloaded from Google books or viewed at DQC.)

21. May we look upon our treasure, [the] our furniture [of our houses,] and our garments. And try to discover whether the seeds of war [have nourishment in] are nourished by these, our possessions.

    John Woolman, *A Plea for the Poor* (1763) in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, Phillips P. Moulton, ed. (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1989), p. 255. QEA

Sources Easily Available in Print

Many of these quotations used were first found in one of the following books. They are all available from QuakerBooks of Friends General Conference (**www.quakerbooks.org**), along with many other books of interest about Friends, past and present.

Rex Ambler, *Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox* (London: Quaker Books, 2001)

Mary Garman, Judith Applegate, Margaret Benefiel and Dortha Meredith (eds), *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women's Writings 1650–1700* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1996).

Catherine Whitmire, *Plain Living: A Quaker Path to Simplicity* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2001)

Online Sources

Most of the original sources cited above are available online, along with many other samples of the writings of early Friends. The acronyms listed at the end of the citations identify an online collection that contains the publication cited. The online version may not be the same edition as the print version cited above, so page numbers may vary.

DQC = Digital Quaker Collection of Earlham School of Religion:
http://dqc.esr.earlham.edu:8080/xmlmm/login.html

QEA: Quaker Electronic Archive, by George Amoss: **http://www.qis.net/~daruma/**

QHP = Quaker Heritage Press, by Larry and Licia Kuenning: **http://www.qhpress.org/texts/index.html**

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