Each of Us Inevitable

Some Keynote Addresses,
Given at
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and
Friends General Conference Gatherings,
1977–1993,
Revised, Expanded Edition

**Becky Birtha, Thomas Bodine, Elise Boulding,
John Calvi, Stephen Finn, Ellen Hodge,
Janet Hoffman,
Arlene Kelly, William Kreidler, George Lakey,
Ahavia Lavana, Muriel Bishop Summers,
Elizabeth Watson,
David Wertheimer, and Dwight Wilson**

Edited by Robert Leuze

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"Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his
or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports
of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

—Walt Whitman: "Salut au Monde," 11, Leaves of Grass

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC), until recently known as Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC), is a North American Quaker faith community within the Religious Society of Friends that affirms that of God in all persons—lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, and transsexual. It gathers twice yearly: Midwinter Gathering is held over the long weekend surrounding U.S. President's Day in February and Summer Gathering is held with the larger Friends General Conference Gathering the first week in July. Once known as Friends Committee for Gay Concerns, the group has met since the early 1970s for worship and play, its members drawing sustenance from each other and from the Spirit for their work and life in the world—in the faith that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life.

Preface to the Internet Edition

The new, revised and expanded edition of *Each of Us Inevitable*—the printed compilation of keynote addresses given by beloved Friends at prior Gatherings of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC) and Friends General Conference (FGC)—includes all the talks in the original edition and eight additional keynotes, bringing the total to 19. The added talks were given between 1979 and 1993.

In February 2003, the community united on changing its name to Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC). The talks are available as separate Adobe Acrobat PDF files for each author on the FLGBTQC website, <*http://flgbtqc.quaker.org*>.

It is hoped that keynotes given after 1993 also will be published someday; however, the richness of content in these additional already-edited talks suggested moving ahead in the present when the possibility of publication exists.

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It may be helpful for some readers browsing on the internet if I offer here at least brief hints, however inadequate, of that "richness" that lies in specific talks.

Elizabeth Watson (1977: "Each of Us Inevitable") came to help us accept ourselves. Her message is not "love the sinner, not the sin," but, "I love you, and I love you *for* your givenness, not in spite of it." She offers an account of the life story and the healing words of Walt Whitman.

Arlene Kelly (1979: "Estrangement and Reconciliation") brought answers in the form of difficult questions: How can we remain engaged with people who are different? From what do we feel estranged? What has caused hurt and anger within us? Do we see that we come to Gathering both as oppressor and oppressed? Can we find ways to step into the shoes of the other person? What is involved in being "reconciled"?

Janet Hoffman (1982: "Eros and the Life of the Spirit") spoke on themes of exploring and wrestling with new insights; fiery passion; relinquishing our need; and transformation. Eros, she believes, drives us toward God and gives our life its basic meaning. Love demands a complete inner transformation. Love (not guilt) leads to social change.

Dwight Wilson (1984: "Nurturing Our Relationships within an Often Hostile Community") spoke from his personal experience as a black man. His message was concerned with trusting one's own perceptions and understanding—not society's mainstream view, not scripture, not the internalized hatred that society may try to induce in us. He spoke of the sometimes negative role of the institutional church for blacks, women, pacifism, gays, and lesbians.

Arlene Kelly (1984: "Nurturing Friendship and Lover Relationships") sees "coming out" as a step toward taking responsibility for ourselves as individuals. In our friendship and lover relationships, are we feeling defective, she questions; have we relinquished some of our power? She discusses ten factors essential to building relationships that are whole.

Elizabeth Watson (1985: "On Wholeness") recognizes our patriarchal, hierarchal, and homophobic civilization and religious heritage. She discusses the Christian church and Jesus; the power of the human community; "dwelling in possibility," and her personal odyssey into wholeness. Can we take charge of life and healing by imaging a desired outcome?

Elise Boulding (1986: "The Challenge of Nonconformity") acknowledges the need to bond across differences—because we need others to make us whole—and the fact that it's more difficult for those called to "nonconforming witnesses." For "publicly gay" persons, special strengths are needed; they are the social change activists. The "gay witness," she says, includes equality, nonviolence, community, and simplicity; gays should be viewed not as embattled victims but as co-workers in reweaving the social web for us all.

Thomas R. Bodine (1987: "Caring Matters Most"), drawing on his own experience, began with a description of the wide diversity of Friends throughout the world. How to change people? How to bridge the differences? he wondered. What happens if we seriously try to practice Christian "gifts of the spirit" in those parts of the Quaker world that hate homosexuality?

Janet Hoffman (Friends General Conference, 1987: "To Listen, To Minister, To Witness"). Her wide-ranging talk includes: living "without seatbelts"; following a corporate leading, not censoring it; "dis-illusionment"—a good thing ("Offend me!" she declares); to minister—sometimes just by being oneself; to love someone—to become in some sense the person we love; to witness—to be faithful to the spirit. She touches on personal growth, the true evangelist, continuing revelation, seeking, stages of development in pacifism, and committed unions.

David Wertheimer (1988: "Bias-Related Violence, Gay Marriage, and a Journey Out of the Society of Friends") shares some personal, Quaker-related experiences: seeking marriage with his (male) partner under the care of his meeting; studying and later teaching at Quaker schools; enrolling as a Quaker in divinity school. He asks whether Quakerism works well only when it can function one step removed from the harsh realities that it contemplates. He sees FLGC as a committee on sufferings, a critical group to helping Quakerism discover how to survive. Death threats led him to question his Quaker belief in nonviolence. His talk includes input from those present at Gathering.

Ahavia Lavana (1988: "Helping and Healing"). When Ahavia's son Hunter had AIDS and later died of it, what helped and what did not help? What was healing and what was not? She speaks on accepting what is beyond our control.

Bill Kreidler's address (1989: "Tending the Fire") is his intensely personal but often humorous account of learning to tend his spiritual flame following an addictive, abusive relationship—by being honest, by being open, by practicing, and by being easy with himself. He talks of the ministry of our community and of how it helped him reach the goal he had envisioned ("old Quaker ladies" tap dancing).

Ellen Hodge (1989: "Tending the Fire") offers differing images of fire: Kristallnacht, persecution of "witches," a 1963 bomb in a Birmingham church, Vietnam and Cambodian napalm; candlelight vigils for the slain Harvey Milk; the Japanese *Bon* festival. She retells, in modern vernacular, the Biblical story of Moses for its relevance to our situation.

Stephen Finn (1990: "Celebrating *All* Our Being") describes a personal journey, illustrating reasons some people have trouble celebrating their being. He asks, does one feel shameful rather than worthy of experiencing "heaven on earth"? Does one adopt compensatory mechanisms to get through a life without heaven? Does FLGC sometimes serve to shield us from the need to be open about our shame?

Muriel Bishop Summers (1990: "On Living in Integrity") spoke of living with integrity—the quality of one's relationship with all of creation—and with oneself: a process. She discusses the balance between integrity and safety; the need of being whole, not fragmented; some essentials for wholeness; and the Divine Presence as ultimate reality, whose nature is love and whose character is truth.

John Calvi (Friends General Conference, 1990: "Laying Down the Weapons 'Round Our Hearts") offers steps to healing: surrendering; inviting one's angels; receiving, with honesty and tenderness, the messages that are sent; entering upon the dance between hope and fear.

Becky Birtha (1991: "'Accept It Gracefully'— Keeping Our Creative Gifts Alive") shares her personal experiences with healing, growing, dealing with pain, and loving herself—often as expressed in her poems.

George Lakey (1991: "Our Bodies, Our Elves") sought a vision of the new creation. He emphasizes, in six general areas, gifts that lesbians, gays, and bi's can give to the Society of Friends and the larger world; the areas are embodiment (in a human body); the erotic (as a bridge to spiritual experience); vulnerability (seen as a doorway); facing pain; reaffirming difference; and love (moving beyond judgmentalism).

Elizabeth Watson (1993: "Night and Day") relates how the titles of some Cole Porter songs evoke reflections from her own life. "Night and Day"—falsely dividing the world (a continuum) into opposites. (Are we the "good guys"?) "Down in the Depths"—unlearning the shame and guilt inspired by our Judeo-Christian tradition. (If there is sin, it is in not caring.) "In the Still of the Night"—embracing the darkness; finding it full of possibility, a time for gestation, for creation, for rest.

—ROBERT LEUZE

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EDITOR ROBERT LEUZE has been involved with gay Quaker groups since 1973, first in New York City where he attended Morningside Meeting and subsequently with the group that evolved to become the present-day Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. He grew up in rural Northern New York near the eastern end of Lake Ontario, amid the extreme homophobia of the McCarthy period. During his college years at Yale University no one he knew (or knew of) was openly gay. He came out (to himself and two or three others) his senior year and, a year after graduation, moved to New York City. He and his present wife Sarah fell in love in the late 1960s and were married in 1969, believing that psychoanalysis had changed his orientation. He came out for the second time in the mid-1970s, but he and Sarah remain very happily married after 34 years. He pursued a career as an opera singer in the 1970s and 1980s and continues to perform in solo concerts—concerts that usually include songs relevant to the gay experience. He is a longtime member of the Yale Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae Association (Yale GALA), and of Outmusic, a GLBT organization for singers and songwriters.

Kim Hanson

Robert Leuze

On Living in Integrity

Muriel Bishop Summers

Keynote Address, Midwinter Gathering
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns
February 1990
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I want you to see just a little bit of the other side of Muriel Bishop who, this afternoon, after she'd heard so much about Quaker saints and women who are upholders of the meeting and proper and correct people, had to go out and buy herself—*[Muriel displayed a bright red petticoat, evoking laughter]*.

Now that you're in the proper mood, I want to thank you very much for risking having me come. I feel rather like a lion that's been thrown among the Christians: you know, one of these straight people who meanders into a gay group and isn't quite sure whether she'll be devoured or not. But all the time I've known, and been associated with, FLGC, I have had nothing but tender loving care and tremendous warmth and affirmation, and I've been taught a great deal. I really appreciate your inviting me to be with you this weekend.

I'd also like to thank the support group who came out to Pendle Hill and spent some time in worship sharing with me to give me some insights and some courage. And most of all I want to thank you for helping me go to Pendle Hill. It has been a tremendous experience. It's been a place of challenge, a place of renewal, a place where I spent the first term doing almost nothing except letting go and learning to experience my senses again. I realized soon after I had arrived there that I had forgotten what the fall smelled like. When you go into prisons a lot you lose a sense of what it feels like to be in the country. It breaks my heart to think of all those men and women who are not going to see the outside for many years. So I spent the first few weeks just smelling the earth and the wonderful fall smell of the leaves. It has been a time of change for me, a time when I have gotten in touch with a lot of myself that I thought had been carefully put on one side. You know, rage, for instance, or grief and tears and all the stuff

some of us pretend has been dealt with. I realize that those in charge of looking at speakers probably thought they were getting a staid proper Quaker grandmother. They didn't realize I was going to Pendle Hill and what might happen there. And I don't think that Pendle Hill knew I was going to buy red petticoats either . . . but there we are. That's just the way of life.

On Integrity and Process

I want to talk a little bit about integrity. Those of you who are good scholars will know that the word comes from the Old French and Old Latin meaning "moral excellence," "wholeness," "unity," or "probity." I had to look up "probity," I must confess. I discovered that it is "demonstrated integrity, honesty, thoughtfulness, responsibility, fairness in ones dealings." A statement which was given to me recently was that one often teaches only what one needs to learn. I'm not here to teach, but I do think I have to continue learning about integrity or wholeness. How do I live in integrity? I think it has to do with the quality of my relationship with all of creation—and with process.

"With all of creation" includes myself. What is the quality of my relationship with myself? How do I make decisions? Who or what is my final authority? Who gives me support? I read a statement many years ago by Norman Whitney. He wrote in language which we would now consider exclusive or certainly sexist, although knowing Norman Whitney a little I don't think he would have meant it that way. His statement, which has meant a lot to me over the years, goes like this:

> There is an ultimate reality in our universe: beyond us—but of which we are a part; above us—but equally within us. The nature of this reality is love; its character, truth. And the measure of a man is the measure of his identity with this reality and the quality of relationship with his fellow men. Not one of these but both.

Perhaps sharing some of my own journey will illustrate something of the matter of integrity and of process. About five years ago I applied for a job with the Baptist church—running an organization which works with prisoners and ex-prisoners. I was appointed also as part of the pastoral team of the Baptist church. I was asked to participate in a validating service of installation, and I thought, "Well, what's a good Quaker to do about that?" So I asked to see the service. And when I read it I realized that there was no way I could use the words: words from my early Baptist training that I was somewhat in revolt from. When I told this to the pastor, he very generously said, "Write your own. Then let me look at them, and I'll see what I think."

So I got out the *London Yearly Meeting Book of Discipline,* some good Isaac Penington, and I rewrote a confessional script for myself, using words that felt

appropriate. I was very much aware of not wanting the church or other people to dictate my faith or my lifestyle. I didn't want to be seen as fitting into the kind of evangelical mold. (I think there is a place for evangelism in my heart but not necessarily Baptist evangelism.) It felt very risky, because I knew if they did not accept my statement, I would probably be out of a job. *You* know the kind of situation—probably better than I do. My statements were in fact rephrasings of questions and answers attesting to my religious faith and my purpose and why I wanted to work with prisoners. They were made in truth. They used words—good Quaker words—that were open to interpretation: the kinds of statements that might mean one thing to you but something quite different to me. My employers chose to interpret in a way that allowed them to appoint me, to accept me very warmly, and to invite me to take part in services. But I knew that if they had pressed me on the interpretation I would not have been able to affirm their interpretation of those words. Does that sound kind of muddy? It does to me now, and I think it did a little then. Yet I believe I was acting with integrity. I needed the job. I knew I could do it well, even if it was in my own way. I know that my own particular actions in situations inside the prison were good ministry—even if I wasn't preaching the Gospel in the way some of my Baptist friends would have expected me to do.

I am in danger . . . of compromising my integrity in the prison situation and in the church. I know that I do not . . . preach the Gospel in the Baptist manner. I've had to ask myself if this is in fact deceitful to those that fund me and fund the organization . . .

The sort of thing that I would do? I'll give you one instance: This prison is the only federal penitentiary for women in Canada; women who are serving two years or more go to it from all across the 3,000 miles of Canada. When I went there I met a woman from some 1,500 miles away in her mid- to late forties. When I first saw her I asked what she missed in prison. She said, "Touch. I miss tender touch. I miss my grandchildren coming and hugging me. I miss my friend holding me." So during my first visit all I did was sit and hold her hands and then put my arms round her and rock her. I think that was ministry; I think it was Christian ministry. It was not necessarily Baptist ministry. But I think it was what I was called to do.

The process over these intervening years has made it increasingly clear to me that I am in danger and have been in danger of compromising my integrity in the prison situation and in the church. I know that I do not believe in the way that my very dear supportive Baptist friends believe. Nor do I preach the Gospel

in the Baptist manner. I've had to ask myself if this is in fact deceitful to those who fund me and fund the organization, particularly some of the people who send me their "widow's mite" along with little notes saying, "It is so good to know that there is someone in the prison preaching Christ crucified."

It feels a little to me like the situation of William Penn and the sword. I'm sure most of you know the apocryphal story of William Penn going to George Fox and saying, "Can I be a Quaker and still wear my sword?" And George Fox saying something to the effect of "Wear it as long as thou canst." I think I've come to feel I can no longer wear this sword because I feel it's somewhat smeared with dissembling, if not deceit. That's part of the reason why I recently resigned from my job and feel somewhat out on the limb at the moment. And it's part of the reason too why I think I am going to turn down the opportunity to be a chaplain in a prison for women. I feel I can't do that unless I'm very clear with people about what I do or don't believe.

This hasn't been a sudden happening or a sudden illumination; it has taken over five years. I know that there is such a thing as right timing. I've experienced a lot of support and love while I've been coming to this decision. But this is a time when I have to choose.

Integrity and Safety

There's a balance between integrity and safety: When is it safe to exercise one's integrity to the full? It's another question I'm sure you wrestle with a lot. I do, in different ways. I think of the cyclical passage in the Bible that to every thing there is a season, a time to speak and a time to keep silence. Sometimes, perhaps, I don't judge the time rightly. But it is imperative that I'm in harmony with my inner rhythm: that I stay in touch with and respect my own growth process—that I recognize whether or not it is in sync with the rest of my particular world. Yet I need to do so with as much gracefulness as I can possibly muster so that I don't walk roughshod over other people's feelings. It also means that I need to face my deep fears and as far as possible transform them into my allies.

Steve Finn spoke this morning to much of my condition. I was aware of the cloak which he was speaking of, in my own life. I was reminded of a time when I was struggling with some issues and realized that I was feeling as if I had a shackle around my ankle. Talking it through at a particular workshop, I realized that this shackle was undone and that all I had to do was shake it loose and kick it off. When I had done that in my imagination my impulse was to take that shackle and hurl it as far away as I could. The woman who was working with me said, "Now hang on a minute. That particular shackle has been very useful to you. It's given you a lot of safety while you've been wearing it. Do you really want your first act to be one of violence? What else could you do with it?"

As I thought about it I remembered hearing as a youngster that if you put iron underneath a hydrangea plant it turns color and becomes more beautiful. So in my imagination I went out and bought a hydrangea, and I dug a deep hole, planted my shackle, and put my hydrangea over it. That was a lesson for me in learning where or when it is possible to turn my enemies into allies. I try to do that with other things. It doesn't always work, but it's worth trying.

Am I Whole or Am I Fragmented?

The question still remains: After I've shed a particular role or a particular part of me, who remains? Who am I now that I'm no longer director of Project Reconciliation, when I'm no longer a member of the pastoral team with all the affirmation and kudos that go with that. Who am I when I'm not being a weighty Quaker? Or a cosmic granny? Who are you when you're not your professional selves? Or your parenting or partnering selves? Who is the true self that informs every role that you and I play? And is that self rooted in the rock of integrity, of wholeness? Am I whole or am I fragmented?

There's an old story of a seeker in India who went to the teacher. And the teacher told him that if the seeker traveled to the next village there would be found everything that was needful to sustain his life or her life. But when the seeker got to the village all that was to be found were some pieces of wood and some bits of wire and some nails. Disappointed, he went back to the teacher and said, "There's nothing of value there," and went on his way. A couple of years later the seeker passed through the village again and found the teacher sitting under a tree playing a sitar—made of nails, wood, and wire.

As long as we think of ourselves as bits and pieces just ready to be discarded, we will never make beautiful music. What can you or I make of the bits and pieces of our lives? And recalling Steve Finn's words this morning about the times of silence, remember that the spaces make an important part of music. You can't have music without spaces between some of the notes—at least I think it would be a peculiar kind of noise. But it's important, I think, that as we gather together our life pieces, we check the integrity of our stuff: Is the wood sound—even if it's in small pieces? Must I clean the rusty wire or straighten out the nails? Can I bring the pieces into harmony, into wholeness? What is the quality of the pieces of our life—to the earth? to the environment?

Incidentally, the quality of relationship also involves being aware of and respecting and protecting our own boundaries. None of us is called to solve all the problems of the world, though we may need to be aware of them. We need to be aware too of the little things we can do to act responsibly to the environment and the earth. We may not be able to control industry. We can perhaps give up the use of Styrofoam cups. We can use biodegradable detergents.

An incident comes to my mind of the Pendle Hill group who were concerned we were using so many paper napkins. So the students appointed a Napkin Committee—a very famous napkin committee at Pendle Hill. And they came up with the idea that instead of using paper napkins we would create our own cloth napkins out of bits and pieces of material that were around. A visiting teacher made a pigeonhole box for us with our names, providing a place for us to put our napkins. They can be washed along with everybody's individual laundry so it doesn't take extra soap. Sounds a little thing. We may only save a few dozen trees a year—maybe not that many—but it does show some sense of integrity and put some meaning behind our words when we say we want to care for the earth and the environment.

What are those little things we can do? And what about our person-to-person relationships, whether they are in groups or individually—our one-to-one relationships with our lovers, with our partners, with our children? Do we practice moral excellence, respect, honesty, truthfulness? Are we inclined to use or manipulate or exploit one another? My own growing up was in what I now recognize to have been a dysfunctional family—I, on the one hand, was a very indulged youngest child; but I also experienced sexual abuse over many years. This background taught me the survival technique of manipulative sweetness. I knew very well how to get my own way by being sweet. And I'm still aware of this and sometimes have difficulty distinguishing between the self that is sweet, loving, and availably charming and my real self. When am I being a woman of integrity and when am I merely being someone who desperately wants to be loved? At least I'm now aware of that and can take some responsibility for it. But it's often easy to get sloppy. That cloudiness of integrity can show up in a variety of ways, of which I'm sure you're all only too aware in your own lives.

> It is tremendously important that the integrity of the life and purpose of FLGC is maintained, both for the sake of FLGC and also for the wider community. . . . We must remember that truth without love is violence; and love without truth is sentimentality.

I do want to affirm and express my deep thankfulness for the part that FLGC has played in giving its contribution to Quakerism. I truly believe that the steadfastness you have shown in the struggle has profoundly affected both many individuals and meetings—not always comfortably but certainly with extreme value. And the quality of your meetings for worship, of Quaker process, indicates to me a vibrancy and a vibrant cutting edge in Quakerism. I don't have to pretend nor do you that everything is always all right and that we're always a perfect group. We know better. But that, in my mind, gives emphasis and

validity to what is good. It is tremendously important that the integrity of the life and purpose of FLGC is maintained, both for the sake of FLGC and also for the wider community. And it is *as* important that you be met with integrity by the so-called straight Quakers. *All of us—gay and straight—are diminished and dishonored when we do not meet each other that way.* How can we, in truth and lovingly, help one another in this? By remembering that truth without love is violence; and love without truth is sentimentality. We need both.

Gathering the Essentials for Wholeness

I noticed on that lovely purple flier advertising the Midwinter Gathering a paragraph headed "Gathering Essentials," which listed the practical details of this event. "Gathering" was used as a noun, if my grammar is correct. What if we used it as a verb—and said "gathering essentials"? If you had to make a list of what is essential to be gathered for wholeness, what would you gather? Perhaps when you have a spare minute in this crowded weekend you'd like to make a list. My list would include a spiritual foundation involving time—time for reflection, prayer, and worship; time for looking at the trees and stars and sky and walking in the rain. It would include time for listening, listening to the inner voice. It would include a sense of connectedness—connectedness with the whole of creation, a recognition that I am part of the earth; my roots may not physically go into the earth, but I am part of the earth. It would include a vision of healing, of healing for the planet and of healing between peoples. I used to jib at the word "religion" until I realized that it has it roots in "binding." The origins of the word are connected with "obligation" and "bonding." We have an obligation to bond with one another and to bond with our world. My vision of that healing will determine how I order my life: What kind of career or what kind of lifestyle; whether I build munitions or bridges; whether I make beautiful furniture or contribute to breaking it down in some way; whether I build housing for the poor or mansions for the rich; whether I opt for climbing Jacob's ladder or dancing Sarah's circle.

I don't know if you've ever done the exercise of comparing these two ways of being: With Jacob's ladder, you stand in a row and imagine you are on the ladder; then you imagine lifting one end up, and there you are, on this ladder. You may be at the top or you may be at bottom. But how does that feel? What's your view? How do you include children on the ladder? How do you move? How do you get up or down? What does it feel like when the ladder is reversed and having been up on the top you now are down on the bottom?

Then go into Sarah's circle. Whom can you see in the circle? People that you couldn't see on the ladder? You can expand it so much more easily. You can bring children in. You can laugh much more easily. It's very hard laughing on the ladder. It really is.

My essentials for wholeness would also include a sense of self-worth. It would include a claiming of my power. Particularly, I would want a claiming of power by all oppressed people whether they are gay and lesbian, whether they are women or children, or whether they are the poor or homeless. I would want us to be able to claim that power—not a power "over" but a power "with," a power to move all people forward into healing.

My list of essentials would include having respect for one another. It would also include honoring my feelings and your feelings—whether of pain or rage, love or fear—and the safety to express them. On Sunday I was walking with Marshall Brewer around Pendle Hill. Some remark was made, and I suddenly found myself in tears. Well, a few months ago I would not have done that. But I am learning to be in touch with my tears and for it to be all right, for it to be safe for me to weep, preferably with a friend. So that would be one of my essentials.

> The Divine Presence as ultimate reality can and does inform us and will enable us to live in integrity. There is an ultimate reality whose nature is love and whose character is truth. And the measure of each one of us is the measure of our identity with that reality and the quality of our relationship with all of creation. Not one of these but both.

My list of essentials for wholeness would include relationship and community because I believe we were born for a relationship, not for isolation. It would include compassion. Matthew Fox talks about compassion as the ability to be with another in pain but also in celebration; you need both of these "twin energies" for compassion.

It would include love. I'm not sure which definition of love would be right; I have a couple that I like. One is the willingness and desire to help the other to realize his or her full potential, to become everything the Divine One wants that person to become. And the other I like is Henry Nouwen's statement in *Intimacy* of the characteristics of love: truthfulness, tenderness, and total disarmament. He says an encounter in love is an encounter without weapons. How often do I encounter another—how often do you encounter another, whether lover, friend, child, employer, prisoner—how often without weapons, weapons of attack or weapons of defense? Sometimes being without weapons must feel very powerless, yet there is great power in that defenselessness. But how do I gather the strength for such defenselessness? In his book *The Peaceable Kingdom* (in which he takes considerable artistic license with Quaker history), Jan de Hartog on several occasions portrays characters that find themselves in situations of distress or in situations of difficulty; the only advice they are given at the

time is to "mind the light." And they are portrayed as having developed the spiritual discipline to go into meeting, whatever the circumstances—not necessarily the physical sitting down with another or with more than one person, but the going within, entering the inner silence wherever they happen to find themselves—to listen for the divine murmuring within.

Like a woman bearing an unborn child which she cannot put aside while she makes dinner or has time with her lover, we carry within us the divine essence which is available to us if we would take time to practice the Presence. The Divine Presence as ultimate reality can and does inform us and will enable us to live in integrity. There is an ultimate reality whose nature is love and whose character is truth. And the measure of each one of us is the measure of our identity with that reality and the quality of our relationship with all of creation. Not one of these but both. Upward and downward and outward—which might suggest, to some, the cross. But before the cross became a Christian symbol, it was an ancient representation for Hecate, the goddess of the crossroads. (Similarly, the serpent represented the ancient wisdom of Gaia before it was adopted to symbolize the tempter and seducer of Eve.)

Perhaps we are at the crossroads individually and as a society—both within the Society of Friends and in the wider society. Whether we view the cross as crucifixion or as crossroads, can we regard it as a symbol of transformation and new direction, of linking us with one another and with the divine in the work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation?

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Muriel N. Bishop Summers was a Quaker by convincement who joined the Religious Society of Friends in Canada in 1958. A mother and grandmother, Muriel was born and raised in London, England. As an active Baptist, she struggled (unsuccessfully) during the World War II years to find congruence between the violence of war and the teachings of Jesus. The struggle led her to Quakerism. Married in 1946, she emigrated with her first husband and two children, Adrian and Elaine, to Canada in 1951, where her son Stephen was born. Among other things Muriel was active in Quaker circles, in business, and in prison ministry. Following two years at Pendle Hill, she served as a

friend in residence at Woodbrooke in Birmingham, England, for the academic year 1991–92. She served as co-clerk of the 1992 Friends General Conference Gathering in Canton, New York. Her first marriage ended in 1988. In September 1992, following a "story-book romance," she married Douglas Summers. They had first met in 1941 but lost touch and were not reunited until 1991, 50 years later. They lived in Banffshire, Douglas's home on the northeast coast of Scotland. In her years in Scotland Muriel focused on "the spirituality of aging," facilitating workshops, giving talks, and writing a chapter in a book on the topic.* In the year 2000, she wrote that she was "grandmother of seven and the greatgranny of four—so far!" Douglas died in March, 2001; Muriel, the following August.

John Meyer

Muriel Bishop Summers

* Albert Jewell, ed., *Spirituality and Ageing* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Pub., 1999).