

MINDING THE LIGHT

Our Collective Journal, Chapter 23

HOW DID THE LIGHT LEAD YOU TO WEST HILLS FRIENDS?

I have often felt a motion of love to leave some hints in writing of my experience of the Goodness of God.

John Woolman

Held in the Light

“Blessed in the certainty that we are held in the Light.” This was the final line of our wedding vows. It’s a sentence that jumped out at me even when I was new to having a fully developed brain and planning a wedding; succumbing to the pressure to throw a Martha Stewart Weddings-worthy event. It’s a line that has stuck with me as a mantra during rough patches. It’s a line that, even if we did it all over again and eloped, I would use. It’s a line that the WHF community has reminded me of and exemplified over and over again.

This past summer I was perusing our wedding album. In the photos were people I didn’t recognize. As friends of my partner’s parents, they’d been invited out of obligation and I met them briefly only on

our wedding day. There were friends, who were great friends at the time, and with whom many, for one reason or another, we’ve lost touch. There were extended family members with whom we have little to no relationship.

Also in those photos are people from WHF. Mike married us; our flower children were children we knew from this community. From centerpiece bouquets to candid shots, throughout our photos is the presence of WHF.

My attendance and participation waxed and waned as different life events, travel, house location, etc. happened. Even during those times of being away for months on end, I missed the fellowship and intellectual, emotional and spiritual stimulation I received every time I walked through the doors.

The need for a loving, accepting, encouraging, enveloping, real community deepened when we started a family. My desire to provide a place for my children where

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they were exposed to a nurturing, spiritual environment; where teaching about a loving, gracious God, who leaves a lot of room for questions, became what seemed like a basic need.

As I allowed myself to be invested, I found myself describing WHF as a place I could be myself without justification. I didn’t need to hide the parts of me that, in the past, hadn’t been “good enough” or too weird for church. I didn’t need to separate my church friends from real-life friends. For once in my life I looked forward to centering into a spiritual practice that included all parts of me (even the rebellious parts!), and was not afraid of God.

I am so honored that I, (along with my family, friends, and whomever else has been brought into the consciousness of WHF), have been

Minding the Light is a bimonthly collection of stories from the lives of members and attenders of West Hills Friends, a Quaker meeting in Portland, Oregon. Among Quakers, “minding the Light” means noticing, listening for and paying heed to the voice of our Teacher.

Early Quakers kept journals about their relationships with God and shared them with the community. For example, John Woolman’s Journal has been continually in print for more than 200 years. By publishing stories from our community, we hope to continue the Quaker tradition of disclosing God’s activity in our lives.

Each issue is organized around a specific query about minding the Light. Our writers speak from their own experience, not going beyond the measure of Light they’ve been given. We hope these stories will transform our way of seeing God and each other and that they will bring comfort to those who seek news of God’s presence in the world.

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loved fiercely, encouraged and supported. I feel grounded, loved, and, for the first time, safe to be vulnerable as part of a faith community. I have been given opportunities to lead, support and speak just for being me. I trust that what my children are taught will be rooted in love and acceptance for all beings.

Friends, thanks to you, I am home and most definitely blessed in the certainty that we are held in the Light. 

—Elliot Witherspoon

Young Friend's Story

In Godly Play® I can speak without other people judging me. I feel respected by others, and I like the stories.

I also like the music and the singing at the beginning of meeting. 

—Beatrice age 8

[Beatrice's illustration below]



How I Got Here

I came by boat, a wooden boat,
half decked and half open.
The barbarian crew carry animals
to sell, in boxes and cages.
When the storms lash our deck
men and animals howl.

Now here's land for sure:
a smudge of blue hills,
one lighthouse like a white tooth.

I've started to think
how the rich people of this land
will look at me
when I get off this boat
with all these animals.

I know! When I go up to see the Prince
I'll take Him a beautiful leopard. 

—Derek Lamson, September, 1990

At the end of the day, it isn't where I
came from. Maybe home is somewhere
I'm going and never have been before.

—Warsan Shire

When I Reach the Place I'm Going, I Will Surely Know My Way*

On summer Sunday mornings,
the year my daughter was about
to turn one, I could usually be
found hanging out with her on
our front steps. Most of those
mornings, my neighbor Derek
would slam out his front door,
catch sight of me and yell,
“Sister, do you want to go to
Meeting with me?” I'd smile and
say, “No, not this morning,
Derek, thanks anyway.” As a
new Mom with a full-time job
outside the home, the last thing
I wanted was to go sit in a stuffy
church and miss an hour of
watching my girl grow.

I knew Derek was a Quaker and
wasn't concerned about that. My
best friend and her family were
Quakers, as were our oldest fami-
ly friends back in Maine. I had
spent lots of time with Episcopa-
lians, too, but I didn't feel the
urge to go to church anywhere. I
just wanted to be with my family.

Derek continued to call out to
me most Sunday mornings, and
a few summers came and went.

By that time, I was starting to
miss Sunday God time but still
cherished Sundays with no obli-
gations. To stay right here, swing-
ing Mia on her swing and intro-
ducing her to delicious smooth-
ies and pancakes covered in ber-
ries, was church enough for me.

I don't know exactly what hap-
pened, except that I was working
fewer hours, and Mia was bigger,
and one Sunday I wandered up

the hill to West Hills Friends. I sat in the back. That morning Jill and Aaron were the music leaders, and as Jill started to sing so beautifully, I started to cry. The light was coming in those windows casting gold and rose shadows on people in the pews.

I went back the next Sunday. The message was about hunger and our call to welcome everyone to our table. I cried again. Between the music and the politics, something was reaching me.

For about a year, I came most Sundays and sat in the back, not talking to anyone except Gladys and Charles, Pat Evans and Derek. The music was beautiful and the politics were right up my alley. The humor was surprising, quick and unexpected. I loved it. And no one asked me to sign on or explain myself. I was just welcome. It was okay to show up and cry.

Sometimes I cried as soon as I sat down. Sometimes a hymn brought tears. Or the message. Or something shared in open worship. The tears were inevitable, and I was mystified by them.

Then one Sunday I understood. I was home.

It took a few years of God calling out to me through Derek, but I finally got here and have never left. 🔥

—Peg Edera

Author's note: * The title is from a great song. My favorite version is by Patty Loveless but I couldn't find it on YouTube. Here is a version with the lyrics:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=oENJ7Xi71g4

This paper is
Post-Consumer



100%
Recycled

Come to the Table

In April 1987, I dreamed that I was being “called” and that I would have to give up my life to accept the call. If giving up my life was a metaphor, I was ready to go anywhere, so I got down on my knees and offered my life to Jesus. I wrote in my journal that I wished I knew whether I was doing the right thing and whether Jesus was in my life.

That night, I had a dream: Jesus was standing at a long, wooden refectory-type table in an old-fashioned sort of restaurant-inn at the crossroads. The inn was one-storied, long and low. I was among a group of people seated around the table listening as he spoke. We were in a long eating room with a door that opened to a country-like path or crossroads. It was warm and summery. If there was food or drink at the table, it wasn't visible. I could hear Jesus' voice as he spoke but didn't remember on waking what He said. At one point, Jesus turned and looked down at me with a huge smile. He had beautiful, white, even teeth.

The dream reassured me of Jesus' presence in my life and seemed to affirm I was being called, but there was nothing to indicate what I was supposed to do next.

Eighteen months later, I still had no idea of my calling, but one night I felt strongly led to go to church the next Sunday. I wanted to go to a Quaker church because I'd read a book with a Quaker character I admired, so I went to the nearest, Tigard Friends. Mike and Erica were visiting Tigard Friends that day, and

Mike was the guest speaker. He talked about West Hills Friends, the church that would replace Maplewood Friends. I spoke to Mike after the meeting, and before long Jesse and I were going to Maplewood.

I told Mike about the dream after I'd been attending a few months, and he wondered what I thought it meant. I wasn't sure except that it was a “calling” dream.

Sometime in 1989 or 1990, we decided to start a spiritual sharing group, and Mike asked us to give the group a name. Imagery from the dream came back to me, along with the name *Gathering Along the Way*. Everyone liked the name, so that's what we called the small group that became an instrument of healing for me.

A year or so later, Mike spoke about trying to find an image that represented West Hills, and the image that kept coming to him was a table where all are welcome. He mentioned our potlucks and “coffee houses” and times of sharing around tables. This struck me, but I still didn't see.

Derek came to West Hills in 1990 and was soon writing and performing songs. One morning in the early 90s, as I listened to “Come to the Table” for the first time, I was covered in chills. I finally saw that the Table in my dream was here, at West Hills, and that I hadn't needed to know where to go to find it. All I had needed to do was follow the Light. 🔥
—Sally Gillette

Best Dog in the World

We live next door to West Hills Friends, and some of you may remember our dog Sam. He was a black retriever mix, with a heart as big as can be and a playful spirit. My husband called him “the best damn dog in the world.” And he was!

On Sunday mornings, when children were playing outside in the playground, Sam would drop his tennis ball in the dug out space under the wooden fence that separates our property from the playground. One of the children would talk to him, pick up the ball and throw it over the fence. Sam would retrieve it, drop it in the hole, and someone would pick it up and throw it again, over and over. The children loved this game and so did Sam. This game went on for years.

When Sam got sick, the children made get-well cards for him in Sunday School, and we posted them on his crate.

One late Sunday morning, a member from West Hills knocked on our door. Sam was a little better and greeted her at the door. She said, “Is this the dog we just prayed about?” I was dumbfounded. Who was this stranger coming to my door saying she had prayed for my dog? I’d never heard of such a thing!

I welcomed her in, and as we talked, I realized we held many beliefs in common.

Slowly, cautiously, one Sunday I made my way to West Hills Friends. I was amazed at what I heard (so different from my upbringing), such uplifting music, how welcoming and

authentic people were, and how comfortable I felt here. People actually laughed during the service. and other people besides the pastor got up and talked. It felt revolutionary and freeing for me.

So, here I am, an irregular attender, but I feel at home here, like I never have in another church. 

—Kristine Kiser

Light Brigade*

Sally Gillette, Clerk

Mike Huber, Recording Clerk

Carol Bosworth

Stephen Deatherage

Peg Edera

Pat Matthews

Julie Peyton

Cindy Stadel

Britten Witherspoon

mindingthelight@gmail.com

*Story Committee

It Took a War

On March 19, 2003, I watched in horror as the United States carried out its threats to make “Shock and Awe” a reality in Iraq. Deep psychological pain enveloped me as the bombs rained down. The realization that our government had used lies and subterfuge to get us to destroy thousands of people who had done nothing to us was overwhelming.

At this time my husband Wilbur and I were attending church in Vancouver where we live. I felt lonely and isolated in this Presbyterian community as I did not feel free to share my pain with others. In desperation I said to Wilbur, “Do what you wish, but I am going to the Quakers.”

Both of us had Quaker friends, so their peace testimony was well known to us.

My best friend, who was a Quaker, went with me to visit four meetings in the Vancouver-Portland area. None of these seemed to say, “Yes, this is the place.”

In desperation I called another Quaker friend, Dan, to tell him of my dilemma.

Dan’s response was, “Well, Lorie, there’s one other meeting that you might want to visit. It’s called West Hills Friends Church in southwest Portland. If you go, you have to know that you will probably be the oldest person there.” (“No problem, Dan; I’m usually one of the oldest people wherever I go.”) “And they may laugh, or clap, or even raise their hands.” (“That’s okay, Dan. I can do all of those actions.”)

As Easter Sunday neared, Wilbur and I agreed to attend church together on that day. He said, “Let’s go to the Quaker meeting that Dan told you about!”

I called to get directions to West Hills Friends. A friendly voice answered, and I was surprised to be speaking with the pastor, not a secretary. Pastor Mike’s directions were easy to follow.

On Easter morning of 2003, we walked into West Hills Friends church as we have continued to do on each Sunday since. I crossed the threshold looking for a refuge from the winds of war and discovered so much more—a community and a home. 

—Lorie Wood

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Allowing Ourselves to Dream

In 2009, Beth and I (along with several college friends) moved to Denver, Colorado, hoping to start an intentional Christian community. After only a couple months, our hopes for that endeavor were shattered. Conflict within the community grew to the point that we discerned it was time for us to leave Denver. I had spent the first half of that year in Denver desperately seeking work at places of worship where the theology fit with mine. But I was just one applicant amongst hundreds for a position at almost every church I applied. Having not been to seminary, it was hard for me to stand out in the crowd.

Beth and I were growing frustrated. We had started to entertain the idea that maybe we didn't have a home in the Church any longer. I began to resent that God had supposedly called me into ministry and yet left us stranded in Denver. I started looking into culinary school, or even just packing up and heading back home to Pennsylvania.

It was around this time that a spiritual director in Denver asked us, "What is it that you most want to do?" Beth and I blurted out, "We want to move to Oregon!" She replied, "Why don't you do that?" We began to list our fears for moving even further away from all of our family and friends, finances, jobs, etc. Our spiritual director stopped us after some time of bashing the idea of moving to Oregon and said, "Why don't you allow yourselves to dream about

moving to Oregon for two whole weeks. . .dismiss all of the voices of doubt and just have fun with the idea."

So we did just that. Beth and I imagined driving to the coast. We imagined hanging out in Portland. We thought about the smell of old growth forests. I had visions of fly fishing, and Mt. Hood. Our hearts built with anticipation as we really started to imagine ourselves in Oregon. Each time a voice of doubt crept into our dreaming, we politely asked it to leave.

A couple days into the project I logged onto my computer and went to a website listing youth ministry jobs throughout the country. I scrolled through the list slowly, dismissing churches based solely upon their denomination until one listing popped out from the screen, "West Hills Friends Church." 

—Mark Pratt-Russum

My Angel

My angel led me to WHF in 1994.

One day I was led to try attending church again after a five-year abstinence. Since I did not drive, I walked to the closest church up the street. The people were so nice, and we met after for fellowship, coffee and chocolate cake. Chocolate cake! Since I am a true chocoholic, that surely was a sign I should go there.

On the way out, there were two nice elderly ladies at the door handing out a paper. I read it while walking home. It was a list of what and whom I should vote for in the coming election. I could not believe they would do that and did not agree with most of it.

My neighbor Barbara lived across the street with her young son. When I got home, Barbara was outside having a tag sale as usual to pay her monthly rent. So I stopped to let her know my disappointment with the church. We agreed they were wrong in what they did.

Barbara said she'd heard of a Quaker church in the neighborhood and maybe we could go there next week. I said "QUAKER?" She said yes, and going to a Quaker church would help to keep her young son out of wars. I said, "I hear they are tolerant people, but would they actually put up with us?"

Together, we gave it a try, and we liked it, but no chocolate cake. On the way home, I read the bulletin, and it said on the back that women were invited to Helen's for a Christmas get-together. Well, we looked at each other and burst out laughing. Us? At a church women's do? What a hoot! Then I read there would be food. As we were both poor, we decided to go for the free food.

We had a nice time at the get-together, and after that I attended women's group every time it was available. WHF and the women's group saved my life. They were the only places I could find peace in my very sad and chaotic life. I learned to walk and talk with Jesus again. I became a member until I moved to Massachusetts ten years later.

Barbara attended WHF a couple of times and then moved away, and we lost contact. I know she was my angel placed to lead me to WHF, a wonderful place with loving people, and she did a perfect job. I was also led back to Jesus, and occasionally we had chocolate cake. 

—Maryellen

Stranger in a Strange Land

Have I ever felt more like an alien arriving in a place where I didn't belong? I stood in the pouring rain at one of many tables at the 1990 Earth Day Fair in downtown Portland, still astonished that I had managed to find this place, since I was navigating in the days before the MAX, the Internet, GPS, or even cell phones in a town as unfamiliar as the planet Mars. I looked into two kind faces from under my umbrella. What was a Quaker meeting doing at Earth Day? For that matter, what was a Quaker meeting? I hesitantly filled out a request for the West Hills Friends newsletter, not realizing that this church was just 15 minutes from my home or suspecting that this moment was the beginning of my journey back into organized religion, which I had fled the minute I was old enough to leave home.

Through the spring and summer, I read the newsletter with rising excitement. These folks were not at all what I expected and with each issue, I had more and more questions. Then, in the fall, the Gulf War broke out and Ken Burns' heart-breaking documentary on the Civil War filled my living room. I looked from my husband, who had been drafted during the Viet Nam War, to my dear little 3 year old son and was afraid for his future. Who could help me protect him? I remembered the Quakers who had helped boys I knew to evade conscription and decided to venture into West Hills Friends.

There I found worship that could not have been more different than the solemn liturgical services I had

grown up with. What the heck were these people doing? Before I knew it, I was one of "these people" and was teaching pre-school Sunday school just six weeks later. At first, it was all a bit too Jesus-y for me, but I felt so warmly embraced that I just didn't care. Finally, someone in Oregon knew my name and cared if I lived or died! If my new friends are willing to accept me just as I am, I thought, I should accept them in exactly the same way.

Then one Sunday, I took home a pamphlet about the Northwest Yearly Meeting's Faith & Practice on Sexuality from the rack in the lobby. I was shocked, hurt, and scared as I read these harsh words. I made an appointment with the young pastor, Mike, who had offered me so much encouragement from the moment I arrived, and tearfully told him that I could not be part of West Hills Friends if this was what the meeting believed.

After hearing me out, Mike said, "There are other people here who question what is in that pamphlet. Please don't leave because of that. We need people to help us with this conversation. If this pamphlet is making you not want to come to church here, maybe we should take it off the rack."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How could the feelings of an alien from two thousand miles away matter this much? Why did I, a newbie to all things Quaker, have a voice in such an important concern? This was my first lesson in how the people of WHF live into the call to see that of God in everyone. 

—K.D. Burnett

Love at First Listen

My church of origin was conservative and patriarchal, and I spent most of my young life wrestling the belief that I would never be worthy enough for God's favor (even as a child, I was sensitive and perfectionistic – I didn't need a church to condemn my faults, as I did so quite well on my own). I left the church because I realized that I didn't need God to still be good and worthy. Returning to church came with the conclusion that I didn't need to be good and worthy to be in a relationship with God. Perhaps God existed to lift up those who didn't feel good enough or worthy enough, rather than condemning those who tried in earnest to live good lives, but somehow fell short of the mark.

Still, I found it very difficult to find a religious home. We tried taking our whole family to a Unitarian Universalist congregation for a while, figuring they'd take the atheist (Dave), the Christian (Mark), and me: the question mark. It didn't fit any of us well. As I surrendered to this reality, Mark suggested I try attending a Quaker meeting. I was reluctant – all I knew about Quakers I had learned from the movie *Friendly Persuasion*. I hoped some Quaker hats and bonnets would be involved.

Google Maps showed West Hills Friends as the closest meeting to our home. I also discovered NWYM and its evangelical ties, which sowed a great deal of doubt in my mind as to whether my queer, poly family would be welcomed. However, I also read about

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the process West Hills undertook to be a Welcoming Congregation. This willingness to listen together and to be radically transparent about Quaker process led me to give West Hills a try.

When I first came to West Hills Friends, I wept. The songs were right. The message was what I needed to hear. The people were friendly, and there was a rainbow flag out front. But I needed to try another meeting to be sure. I did, and afterwards cried for a different reason. This other meeting wasn't right at all - it wasn't home. I didn't want West Hills to be home - it had all the wrong affiliations. But it was home.

Shortly after I began attending, the process began that ultimately led to the separation of WHF from NWYM. The pain I have seen as West Hills has been ousted has mirrored the pain my own family has experienced as we've been rejected for our willingness to extend love in unconventional ways. While I have worried about exclusion, so far I have been welcomed to participate in the life of the meeting, I've made the dearest friends of my life, and I have been healed by the Light and love I've found at West Hills. I am immensely grateful for the gift of community at West Hills, and hope I continue to be a part of that community for a long time to come. 

—Amy N-K

Story Catcher?

If you have a story but aren't able to get it written for any reason at all, let us know and we'll send a story catcher to help. If you can't come to us, we will come to you.

Light

I followed my atheist husband to church. 

—Sarah Blanchard

Seeking Truth

Before moving to Oregon, I was a member of an unprogrammed Friends Meeting in Tucson, Arizona. My family felt closely connected to many people in the Meeting, particularly three other families. We socialized, traveled and celebrated holidays and family occasions with these families and were supported by them and others in our Meeting during times of illness, loss and hardship.

Once in Oregon, I attended several unprogrammed Friends Meetings, but worshipping with these Friends left me feeling homesick and heart-broken. After a time I began to worship with a community of Lutherans and Catholics. I was welcomed into that community and became quite active and happy there.

One thing, however, began to bother me. Our Pastor would say things like, "because we are Christians, we..." or "as Christians, we..." This didn't ring true for me. When she spoke of the acts of love, welcome, inclusion or service that we performed or feelings or motivations we felt because we were Christians, I knew that I did not, in fact, do or feel those things because I was a Christian.

I've often heard Quakers describe themselves as 'Seekers after truth' and that resonates with me. I believe that whatever loving or kind acts I commit or thoughts or

feelings I have are because I am a person wanting to be moved by the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Love. My favorite query is, "Do we center our lives in an awareness of the presence of God so that all things take their rightful place?" I would hope that my life and intent are motivated by that query, rather than by focusing on Jesus to the exclusion of the God to which he pointed.

I began to feel like a fraud and started to attend what I saw as less prescriptive churches, such as Unity or Unitarian. I found the messages in these churches to be entertaining, but they felt shallow to me. I was missing the Quaker experiences of silence and queries that led to self-examination and growth and allowed the Spirit to lead me to a deeper place.

When I first came to West Hills Friends, I was wary. I had heard warnings and cautionary tales about 'church' Quakers and programmed Friends. I didn't need to worry.

What I found at West Hills was a community of other people who strove to align their thoughts, feelings and actions with the Light that guided them. Perhaps some find that the Light speaks to them through the life and teachings of Jesus, perhaps others feel or experience the Light differently. It didn't seem to matter. What I feel that we all have in common is that we are seekers after Truth wanting to be led by Love and Spirit. West Hills Friends is a sanctuary where I am held and cared for as I seek the Truth and where I find that awareness of the presence of God that I want to move and live from. 

—Mica Coffin

My Kind of People

The other day I looked around the room at West Hills Friends, and it struck me that I was in a room full of people I love who know my story. I thought about all the times in the last five years that I stood up to share during Joys & Concerns—about starting and completing grad school, getting a teaching job, a major illness and minor surgery, my mom’s illness and death, struggles with my family, and my grief. I said a prayer of amazement and wonder at what I had weathered these years and shared in this room. The response came back crystal clear and immediate: “Pretty cool that I brought you the community first, eh?” Yes, God, you do have a pretty amazing plan and I am so grateful.

West Hills is the only real church community I’ve ever had. Decades before I was born, my parents had left behind whatever shards of religion remained from their childhoods. My mom did take us to a Unitarian Universalist fellowship when I was a teenager but it never seemed a very coherent community. I attended UU churches during college but they never felt right—too big, too small, too wishy washy about spiritual matters, too far from home, too early on a Sunday morning. But in 2009 I wanted to try again. I was 29, working a job that left me lots of time to think, and feeling the need for community and tradition.

I checked out one of those online quizzes that matches you to religious groups based on your answers to questions, and my results

came back neo-pagan (sure), UU (yeah) and liberal Quaker (huh, curious). A little Googling showed me a Quaker meeting in SE Portland, and I set a date with myself to go. That week, though, the memory came to me of another Quaker church in my neighborhood, just down the street from my parents’ house. Wouldn’t that be convenient if it worked out? So, I went there instead

It was the first Sunday of Advent and West Hills was decked out in Christmas finery. I found a place to sit near the beautiful colored windows that let that low winter light shine through. That morning, Mike told a story about Howard Hughes meeting Jesus on a flight to Tel Aviv. Hughes, the notorious hypochondriac, was heading to Israel for an experimental medical procedure that would liberate him from his body. “That’s so funny,” Jesus replied, “I’m going to Bethlehem to GET a body!” I probably looked around with my mouth open a little... what is this place?

I remember two other things from that morning: Eric Witherspoon spoke and Greg Morgan welcomed me. I left thinking that I wanted to spend a lot more time with these weird, wonderful, amazing men and people like them.

A few weeks later, Reverend Tara Wilkins of the Community of Welcoming Congregations spoke. In the Q&A after worship, I asked how West Hills became affiliated with CWC. Being a 21st century kid, I had checked out the Northwest Yearly Meeting website and

been quite concerned with what I saw there. Mike told much of the story up to that point, including the work to reconcile their evangelical beliefs with their lived experience that queer people are full members of the WHF community. I remember thinking that even though I don’t identify as queer, a community that can wrestle with this issue can handle anything I might bring to the table. That made me feel welcome, and I hoped maybe these really were my people.

Five years later, I can say that they are. You are. We are. Coming to church never feels like a burden, even in my darkest days. I am greeted with smiles, hugs, and genuine questions about my life and work. The community is growing and changing, but I know for certain that these are my people. 🔥

—Alyss Broderick

Queries for Chapter 24

Our next Query: *How have you experienced the Light away from home?* Tell us a story about a time you received traveling mercies.

We encourage young Friends to participate, so please consider asking very young children in your life whether this query (or a related query in your own words) makes them think of a story. If it does, consider helping the child tell their story in words or images, or ask us for a Story Catcher.

Story Deadline:

Dec. 6, 2015

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What A Gift

Sometimes the Light leads in a quiet way. And sometimes that still small voice can almost seem to follow decision-making, an inner validation to keep moving forward. I think that may have been the way I came to West Hills Friends.

When Patrick and I moved to Portland in the spring of 1988, we decided to find a spiritual community that would work for both of us. I was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. Patrick was raised Catholic. We both had some connections with Quakers in our families. Patrick's mother had attended a Quaker high school. My great grandfather was a Quaker from Illinois.

I had received some non-violent training from Quakers in Seattle years before we came to Portland. Patrick and I both had a good feeling about the Quaker way and decided it might be a common path that would suit us as a couple. We found two Quaker meetings on the west side that interested us. We opted for Maplewood Friends since they had just one service, not two, and that felt more comfortable for us.

We found a tiny band of Quakers preparing for Maplewood Friends

to morph into West Hills Friends with a new pastoral team expected in a month, Mike and Erica Huber. We liked the folks there, and Patrick liked that they played softball together. We attended Northwest Yearly Meeting for the first time that July and from our balcony seats, we got a great feeling as Mike and Erica were introduced. We noticed their integrity, humor, and genuine spirit of service and commitment.

In the following months, we helped prepare the new West Hills Friends for others to join us, as we simultaneously deepened our connections with this loving circle of Friends. We were also expecting our first child. Our older son was born a month after West Hills Friends "officially" welcomed the larger community in the doors in March of 1989.

I have been greatly blessed by many years of membership at West Hills Friends, and I am grateful for the foundation it provided for both of our sons. I have felt supported and encouraged to act at West Hills Friends in areas that touch my heart, such as hunger concerns, earth

concerns, and music. I have felt welcome always, even when I have missed Meeting for a period of time, here and there. I have watched this dear community, this community of God, grow and flourish, and also go forth bravely and with dignity in hard times. I have deep appreciation for the dedicated God-centered leadership of Mike and Erica, and for the many folks who have taken responsibility for different aspects of ministry over the years.

Patrick and I decided years ago to try a Quaker meeting. I know that the Light was gently guiding us to West Hills Friends. And what a gift it has been, and is, in my life.

What a Gift. 

—Leslie Logan



Pew Art: Unsigned sketch found in the offering plate

Finding Love, Life and Joy

We moved in 2009, fully expecting to transfer our membership to a silent, unprogrammed Friends meeting in Portland. We visited both meetings and finally took a week out to visit West Hills: we knew that once we decided about our new Meeting, we'd not be likely to visit anywhere. We were very curious about WHF because of the incongruity of the only three facts we had: WHF was a part of NWYM; WHF was a member of the Community of Welcoming Congregations; and, John Calvi told us that West Hills was among the first to support QUIT, his Quaker Initiative to End Torture. How did these fit together? Who were these people?

We had never visited a programmed Quaker meeting. But that first Sunday in 2010, we found ourselves sitting among people openly sharing their life experiences, spiritual questions, and insights during First Word, Open Worship, and also in Joys and Concerns. They really knew each other! They were a lively and active group, obviously involved with each other, and trust showed in their openness. We returned. And then again. So many were involved up front that it took us four visits to figure out which person was the minister -and he wasn't the "pastor" he was the Released Friend.

Our visiting quickly become regular attendance. This unexpected development created an internal struggle. We were Silent Friends and this was not Silent Worship. Waiting in the silence in community and speaking out of the silence had always held deep meaning for us. It was our heritage and our practice: as individuals daily during the week, and then together in community at Meeting.

And we wanted no involvement with NWYM: we'd heard about their Faith and Practice. When I actually read it, I was sick at heart to see what was there in print. Especially the statements about sexuality.

But we also were fascinated with some of the cultural differences and practices new to us. Between us we'd been members of unprogrammed Friends Meetings in the East, Mid-west, and Northwest, and also lived a year at Pendle Hill. Now we were challenged by this WHF Quaker experience. These people were so alive with spiritual hunger, seeking answers, seeking God in each other and various situations. And yet there was a paid minister and prepared messages, activities, and music every week in worship – all deeply spiritual.

We wanted to be a part of this community! We wanted to be members and join this group of seekers! I finally realized that if I was so disturbed by Faith and

Practice, then I must go to YM and witness to the fact that being LGBTQ was a part of living out what God intended, not something to be condemned as sinful. WHF supported me in this work.

So we joined WHF and continue to find love, life, and joy in this community as we grow together as Friends and practice Quaker ways. The gathering of the community to celebrate our marriage and hold us in worshipful support has been deeply meaningful to us both. What a blessing it is to be a part of this community. 

-Pat and Carol



Pew Art: Unsigned sketch found in the offering plate at West Hills

Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name,
And they're always glad you came;
You want to be where you can see,
Our troubles are all the same;
You want to be where everybody
knows your name.

-Cheers