

# MINDING THE LIGHT

Our Collective Journal, Chapter 25

WHEN HAS THE LIGHT URGED YOU TO SPEAK OUT OR STAND UP FOR SOMETHING?

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

John Woolman

## Where Words Come From

"I love to feel where the words come from." (From John Woolman's *Journal*. See full quote following story.)

The clearest time I felt an urge from the Light, an urgency to speak, is one I've written about in an earlier chapter, when I heard a Voice that would not be denied; but I haven't heard that Voice in 16 years. Now I am learning to distinguish subtle nudges, such as learning the difference between speaking factually versus truthfully. Our Quaker testimonies of integrity and truth-telling require being factual at a minimum; lies do not become us. Speaking truthfully

happens at a different, more profound level.

Last summer at the 2015 Northwest Yearly Meeting annual sessions, I could feel this difference; it was possible to discern the times I was simply speaking (which comes easily to me) and the times I was more intentional, working to "answer that of God" in my hearer. It felt like tuning a guitar, when you turn the peg to tighten a string to bring up the pitch to that just-right point. When I was speaking with one ear tuned, as it were, to what God might be prompting me to say, my words changed. I slowed down. I paused rather than blurting anything out. I weighed what I was about to say, and either found it appropriate or found it wanting.

Here's an example. In my role as Clerk of the Nominating Com-

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mittee, I had to inform a Board that there were concerns about their nominee. Trying to help Friends see that their Board needed to be more welcoming of diversity, I felt prompted to use music as an example, suggesting that while the current Committee members might really enjoy the music of George Beverly Shea, as I do, if they wanted to welcome younger Friends to the Board, or have programs appealing to younger Friends, they may have to put up with hip-hop or rap. It turns out the Clerk of that Board had, as a lad, enjoyed visits by George Beverly Shea to his parents' home. The tension in the room lessened noticeably as we chatted a bit about our favorite hymns.

The experience of last summer has stayed with me, and I am trying to remember to listen within before speaking. Very recently I read these words from Brian Drayton's book, *On Living with a Concern for Gospel Ministry*,

*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.

"As ever, the first motion is to wait until you can feel the cool, quiet strong flow of light and love." As I read those words I thought, "THAT'S it. That describes what I felt and want to continue to feel." 🔥

—Julie Peyton

If you'd like to hear a sample of George Beverly Shea, check out YouTube. Here's a classic: <http://tinyurl.com/hbynafg>

(July 18, 1763, Wyalusing, Pennsylvania, with members of the Delaware tribe and interpreters)

On the evening of the 18th I was at their meeting, where pure gospel love was felt, to the tendering of some of our hearts. The interpreters endeavored to acquaint the people with what I said, in short sentences, but found some difficulty, as none of them were quite perfect in the English and Delaware tongues, so they helped one another, and we labored along,  
Divine love attending.

Afterwards, feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God, and believed, if I prayed aright, he would hear me; and I expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting; so our meeting ended with a degree of Divine love. Before the people went out, I observed Pappunehang ... speaking to one of the interpreters, and I was afterwards told that he said in substance as follows: "I love to feel where words come from."

*Journal of John Woolman*. Houghton Mifflin, 1871, Chapter 8, p. 201

### Young Friend's Story:

#### Fiona's Dream

(given as First Word on 4/11/16)

Hi, everybody. My name is Fiona, as most of you know. I think I might be the youngest person in this building to do First Word. I'm pretty nervous. This is my first time. And I hope you like it.

So a few weeks ago, I had a dream. I dream that seemed like it wanted me to do First Word. So here it is.

So my mind pictured that I was in a cluttered room. It was a very cluttered room. It was full of ladders, tables, and chairs and all that what-not. . . It was completely full of all sorts of things that people don't want. . . . It looked like a garage sale, full of stuff people didn't want, piled in a room that was spray-painted white. And in that room, there were workers with hard hats on. They probably had hard hats on because they were scared that part of that clutter would fall on their heads! They were wearing orange uniforms. I don't know why they were orange. . . dreams are funny that way.

It was completely cluttered except for a little space in one of the corners. It had no clutter in it. It wasn't even spray-painted white. It was just a hole. It didn't have any clutter in it.

The workers seemed to ignore it, trying to avoid all the clutter and putting, for some reason, more clutter in it, as well as trying to make space for more clutter that would just come. But one worker was try-

ing to shove a piano somewhere close to the uncluttered space. And another worker shoved a traffic cone through the uncluttered space – in the uncluttered space – but the uncluttered space stayed uncluttered. It's like the cone almost disappeared.

So one worker was busy moving something to the uncluttered space and he noticed that the traffic cone wasn't in the uncluttered space. And so they put their hand through the uncluttered space to see what would happen, they pulled it out and their hand glowed gold. And so they put their whole body in and then they turned into Jesus for some reason. I don't know why, I can't explain it. I thought it was kind of weird.

The other workers seemed to ignore the worker that had turned into Jesus, and the worker – the worker found a door in the room behind all that clutter. He just left.

And then I woke up, and something called me to do first word.

So today, I want you to think about, when are we the workers? When are we the people that ignore other people? And how can we be more like the worker who turned into Jesus? How can we notice that uncluttered space? And where can you find your uncluttered space? 🔥

—Fiona (age 9)



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# MINDING THE LIGHT

## CHAPTER 25: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT URGED YOU TO SPEAK OUT OR STAND UP FOR SOMETHING?

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### The Most Real Illusion

...light filtered through the moving glass, and it all came back.

#### 1980-1992

..like a three-legged race, in all i did, you were there.  
you turned when i turned,  
smiled when i smiled,  
cried when i cried.  
you were all i was given,  
and all that i needed

#### 1992-1995

..we turned the corner,  
removing the leg strap,  
and walked for awhile.  
i told everyone about you;  
more than they wanted to hear  
but i loved you so much  
i couldn't keep you to myself

#### 1995-2002

...running now, we set off for bigger things  
leaving home, then finding love after love  
a seamless sequence of data and advertising  
certainty about certainty  
you didn't warn me of the road ahead

#### 2002-2012

...i didn't notice when you left  
turned my head one day  
realized you'd been gone a long time  
the mind can numb the heart  
and it did.  
oh, how it did.

#### 2012-2015

...then i felt what i knew.  
you weren't there; hadn't been there  
all along.  
i searched trees and rocks,  
finding only me, my family,  
my friends.  
they are everything, but they will not live  
forever.  
a funeral without end  
your death in me

and so i stopped running  
went home and shut the door  
leaving the porch light on  
just in case you simply got lost

#### 2016

...when i cried for no reason  
when i heard that old song  
when the sky seemed to have a fourth dimension  
when i can hardly contain my joy  
when my boy holds my face  
and my girl sings her songs  
and it feels like all of existence is winking in my direction  
i hear you

you are not what i named you  
you are not nameable at all  
but the echo of a voice is ringing everywhere  
and the antenna i left on that old house  
picks it up more and more  
this beautiful illusion  
the most real of illusions  
is good enough for me.  
welcome home 

—Ryan Blanchard

## Violating the Sanctuary

This particular house is strangely out of place. It's nestled between a True Value hardware store and a line of train tracks. It refused to make way for the encroaching Buffalo Wild Wings, TJ Maxx, and the vast lagoons of pavement that define most of Tualatin's commercial core.

This wayward house is home to Ancient Wonders. It's an old-school gaming store. Over the last 25 years, I've spent hours in this store. It smells vaguely like a bookstore. It also smells of adolescent bodies and Doritos. There's no other smell quite like it.

Novice players come here to purchase their first role-playing books. Parents bring their children to buy Pokemon cards and board games to play as a family. "Grognards" are the people who come to argue passionately about the most esoteric topics imaginable: Could you blind an opponent by casting a "light" spell on that person's nose?

Ancient Wonders is something more than place of business. It's a place of refuge. It's a sanctuary for gamers who might not feel fully accepted or understood in other settings.

One day, I made my occasional pilgrimage to Ancient Wonders. As always, I admired the gemlike collection of dice beneath the

glass countertop. Then, I made my way to the cardboard box of assorted Magic cards. This is my usual destination.

The cardboard box is large enough to serve as a generous sock drawer. It's subdivided into five rows. It is my habit to start at the very front of the first row and I look at every card in turn. I admire the artwork. When I find cards from the 1990's, I'm happy to remember playing this particular game for the first time. When I find cards from the last year or two, I'm intrigued to see how things have changed.

On this particular visit, as I perused the various portraits of elves and angels and animated walls, I heard a couple of other patrons talking about immigration. From what they were saying, I knew that we would never be political allies. But we were all gamers. In this place of sanctuary, I wasn't even tempted to challenge their politics.

And then, one of them said, "The Germans had it right. We just need to put them in box cars." I was so shocked that I spoke without thinking. I said, "Hey! That's not okay!" It was hardly eloquent. And I doubt my outburst changed their way of thinking. I did not carefully discern my words before speaking. But when I spoke, it felt like obedience to the Light. 🔥

–Mike Huber

## Queries for Chapter 26

Our next Query: *What experience of the Light comes to mind when you think of your body as a teacher?* Tell us a story about a time when your body knew something you did not.

We encourage young Friends to participate, so please consider interpreting this query for young children in your life to see if it 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:**

**October 2, 2016**

As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop."

He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, even the stones would cry out."

*Luke 19:37-40*

### An Empowered Moment

Anger empowers. Surprising? Let me explain.

I'm usually reserved around strangers, but on a particular summer day at the Oregon Coast, I was anything but that. Anger enraged me to action like never before.

My husband Dave and I were enjoying a lovely day at the beach. A stiff breeze blew off the breakers as we walked along the wet sand with our dog. At one point we decided to have lunch and walked away from the waves to a dry, sandy spot sheltered by the cliff behind us.

We laid out our picnic and as I looked out at the waves, I saw an injured gull hobbling along next to the waterline.

Walking in the same direction as the gull was a group of five rough looking young men, probably in their early 20s. By their swagger and gestures, it was obvious that they were used to owning whatever turf they were on, and people knew to leave them alone. They were intimidating, large, and loud.

And then they saw the injured gull.

One of them picked up a stone from the beach and threw it at the gull. The gull stumbled. The guy picked up another and threw it too. Enough!!

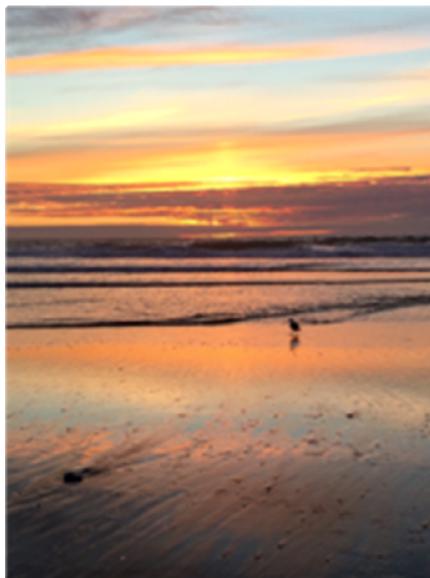
With hot rage, I jumped up and ran toward them, my eyes burning holes in their backs. "LEAVE THAT GULL ALONE!" I shouted at the perpetrator. My determined, direct stare and no-nonsense tone had an immediate effect.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered, and looked down.

They continued down the beach, still swaggering, but the gull survived and, I hope, was able to heal from its injury. 

– Anne A

[Photo credit: Ginny Jensen]



### Moses is Urged to Act

The Lord said [to Moses], "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. . . .

So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

"But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?. . . ."

"And God said, "I will be with you. . . ."

"Moses said to the Lord, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.

"The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.

"But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.

"Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it."

(Excerpts from Exodus 3 and 4, NIV)

Speaking Out

I have spent much of my life passionately “speaking truth to power.” Yet reflecting on the times that I have spoken out or stood up for something, I am aware of so many missteps, mistakes, missed opportunities, and misunderstandings. What comes to mind are the times I failed to speak out or the times I did speak out but, in looking back, feel that I shouldn’t have. Trying to find an answer to this query left me feeling, at first, like something like a failure.

There are, however, two times when I spoke out that I do not second guess. One was when I realized that my father was molesting my stepsister and I confronted him. Although he denied it, he immediately left the relationship with her mother, and so the abuse ceased. The second time was when I reported that a foster child was being abused in a relative’s home.

Again, the charge was denied, but the child was eventually removed from the home.

Thinking about this, a couple of things became clear to me. First, I realized that most of the time when I regretted speaking out I had done so on my own behalf.

Perhaps I thought I was being treated rudely or unfairly. Yet much of the time I have been overly sensitive or what I thought was malfeasance was just human error. But in both of the cases above I was speaking out on behalf of someone weaker and less powerful than I was who had no one else to speak for them.

Secondly, I realized that often when speaking out I have been led not by the Light but by my own ego, agenda, fears or misapprehensions. When speaking out for my stepsister and foster nephew, however, I was being led by the Spirit of Love.

There are some lessons in all of this for me. One is to discern why I feel led to speak out and for whose benefit I am speaking. Another is to speak out of a sense of love for all involved in the situation. And lastly, is to hold myself compassionately as I navigate these waters. 🔥

–Mica

If there are more poems to be written through me, they will come.

My work is to open my heart and listen.

- Nancy Gibbs Richard



Some birds' alarm calls serve both to alert other birds to danger and to warn off predators. There are those who can even pull off a ventriloquist's trick, singing from the sides of their mouths.  
From Science Daily:  
<http://tinyurl.com/hwbgse7>

Speak your mind even if your voice shakes."  
Maggie Kuhn

**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](mailto:mindingthelight@gmail.com)  
\*Story Committee