

# MINDING THE LIGHT

## Our Collective Journal, Chapter 8

WHAT'S SOMETHING YOU HAVE CREATED, IN RESPONSE TO THE LIGHT WITHIN?

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

John Woolman

### Minding the Light

I've heard that there's nothing new under the sun, and that's certainly true of *Minding the Light*. Our Collective Journal is a recent offshoot from a river of Light that Quakers have drawn from and written about for centuries. Here's what I know of the story.

When I came to West Hills over 20 years ago, my faith in God was based largely on personal experience, and I was thrilled to hear the story of George Fox's journey. I, too, had experienced a religious crisis. I, too, had found little comfort in theology and "priestly" answers to my questions. I, too, had experienced Christ as

Present Teacher. But I had never heard the beautiful Quaker testimony that God communicates with everyone, and I didn't know that "mystical" experience is common among Quakers.

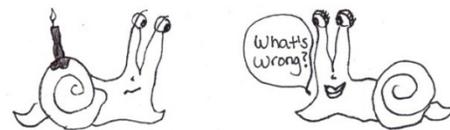
Years later, I cried for joy as I read John Woolman's journal for the first time, so thankful for the gift of his stories. It was edifying to read about his discernment process. And it was thrilling to learn that he followed the Light in dreams and experienced the Light as a "motion of love."

In the Light reflected from John Woolman's journal, I saw that stories of others' interactions with God are a priceless source of knowledge about God and each other.

Once I had recognized the importance of God stories, I felt a deep sense of loss that the Quaker practice of journaling had been

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abandoned. In the present, the Light from our personal stories was hidden under a bushel. I rarely shared my God stories with others, and others rarely shared theirs with me. I wondered how many beautiful stories had been lost to us.

Friend Julie had been nudging me to start doing a newsletter again, and one night I dreamed: *Julie and I were walking somewhere, and she asked me about stories I'd written. I said, "My stories are still in my mind, floating around like flotsam and jetsam."* The next morning, I saw Julie at the Craft Faire, and she asked me again about doing the newsletter. These two events connected the dots between the newsletter and

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 relationship with God to share with the community. A well-known example is John Woolman's journal, which has been continually in print for more than 200 years. Quakers believe that the Light of Christ is in everyone and that God speaks to everyone, giving us all stories to tell. We hope to carry on the tradition of sharing stories about minding the Light by publishing them for our community and making them available to others on the web.

Each issue is organized around a 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.

the stories under the bushel, and a vision began to form.

When I talked to Mike about the idea of a collective journal, he loved it. Way opened, and a new offshoot from the river of Light began to flow.

Our vision for Minding the Light reflects John Woolman's vision for his visit to the Indians in 1759.

*"Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth among them."*

May we listen humbly and expectantly to the spirit reflected in others' God stories, so that we might understand the spirit they live in and receive instruction from them and follow the leadings of Truth in them. As John Woolman's stories have been carried to us on the river of Light, may our stories be carried to others who hunger for news of God's presence in the world. 

– Sally Gillette



*"We are ourselves creations. We are meant to continue creativity by being creative ourselves. This is the God-force extending itself through us. Creativity is God's gift to us. Using creativity is our gift back to God."*  
Julia Cameron, Heart Stories

## Tsunami

Once I went to a birthday party. We were invited at this party to engage in a process called Soul Collage. We found images from magazines to use in collage that represented the journey we were on at this time. I was happy to be there. This was my kind of party with my Friends- symbolic, process oriented, artistic, and metaphoric. Yes, I was ready and happy be there.



My husband had been recently diagnosed with dementia. A few people at the party knew this. Most did not. My husband was functional, amenable and affable, even though he did not fully relate to anyone as he once had. This was a safe place for him to be and it was a comfort for me. We were overwhelmed by the truth of this reality. He was losing his intellectual capacity at a rate that was unusual for his age. We did not know how quickly his condition would progress. We

only knew diminishment was a sure thing.

We spread out around the living room and started sorting through magazines for images that spoke to us. First I found a wave. Then I found a woman with blonde wavy hair. Then I found a giraffe and a golden Buddha, a shooting star, a volcanic eruption, an arch of magenta orchids, a small bridge across a pond. I felt rich.

Every one of these images spoke volumes to me. I started the process of looking at the images and feeling which really pulled me, really engaged me. I let it be an intuitive experience. I let image and impulse and feeling and energy guide me. The wave and the blonde woman were the most exciting images.

The image I created from them was very provoking. The long blond hair was a frame through which a large wave appeared and her dress was made of deep ocean waves. It was a message, I felt, from a higher power, from a guide, a Divine source. It was difficult and unintelligible in many ways. I have looked at it again and again in the last two years. It had truth in it I could never have spoken or created without this particular space and time filled with the wisdom and safety of Friends inviting God to play with us.

My husband died in May this year. I look at the collage now and see a message: The tsunami comes. You become part of the force that is so much greater than you, it sweeps through you and yet you stand strong. 

– Peg Edera

MINDING THE LIGHT  
CHAPTER 8:

WHAT'S SOMETHING YOU CREATED IN RESPONSE TO THE LIGHT WITHIN?

### Considering Water

Over a year ago, during the International Day of Prayer for Water, an awareness landed on me in the form of this prayer. I understood it then to be a direct call from God in a medium (water) central to my life. (He does that.) I've spent over a year since then wondering how to act on this in any way I knew of---after all, how could I do or say anything to fix Hanford???

Today in Meeting, Mike's message showed me that even holding a button, given by an angel with a purpose far beyond my grasp, could matter, if I paid attention to it. Now I pay attention to this, by submitting it as a response to this query, received by my inadequate being. Together we can listen better.

—Carol Bosworth 

### Considering Water

I settled deep into my body  
feeling my way into prayer  
for the waters of Japan.  
And the waters there, so injured  
by the radiation they have absorbed  
while helping humans harness atomic energy  
to power all manner of uses,  
both good and of dubious value,  
echoed my prayer for their healing  
back to me, still in prayer, in my body.

The echoes touched the waters of my body,  
and spoke what my body already knew  
about the waters of Japan:  
all the waters of earth  
are part of each other  
in cycles and patterns of time  
I can barely understand  
with my mind.

The waters know beyond our knowings.

The waters of Japan and the waters of my body  
know themselves as all one Belonging.  
When one is injured or damaged,  
all of them are together in carrying it,  
sharing it,  
serving as lifeblood in us  
as in the entire body  
of Gaia, our home planet.

I prayed my feeble apology  
for what we do to injure water,  
which is us and on which our lives depend.

The waters absorbed my apology  
as they have absorbed all the poisons,  
and a knowing filled up in me  
as if I were a cup for water,  
and this knowing became very loud,  
and shrill as an evacuation siren,  
a dire sound, urgent,  
warning me,  
and the finger of it pointed to  
HANFORD.

Years' long awareness of its time-bomb dangers  
have not changed our knowing  
into action to care for its spreading poisons,  
actions which could save our lives,  
or which could have,  
if taken in time,  
if we had not relied  
on empty promises  
of our immobilized governments  
if all of us had joined together  
in unity as the waters are,  
if we had learned to act together,  
to work out healing of the earth  
in time.

The waters of Japan, in my body, ask urgently,  
Will you act  
in time?!!!

—Carol Bosworth

## O Holy Spirit

I am alone in a small town in Texas, working for the Company, an introvert, living in a hotel, eating alone in restaurants, defaulting to invisibility rather than seeking out relationship. The last thing I want to do is call attention to myself.

But still the creative spark burns. Creativity and ego have been locked in an uneasy dance for over 40 years. Sometimes there's just a nanosecond between the spark and the thought, what will they think of this? It's hard to remember that the spark came first. It's easy to think I am only doing this for the attention it brings to myself. My actions are never pure.

I remember Bruce Cockburn standing before an adoring ovation at the end of a concert, his face a sunfield of smiles, like he was reflecting all the positive energy back onto the audience. I thought, *How does he do that? Why doesn't he trip on his own wires?*

I drive out to a quiet, flat place in the middle of the night. This is Texas. Every place is flat, and the stars at night are big and bright. I don't have a musical instrument, just my sagging buffalo hoop drum. I set into a simple rhythmic pattern while silently entreating the Divine. *I am so lost. I am so confused. Help me.*

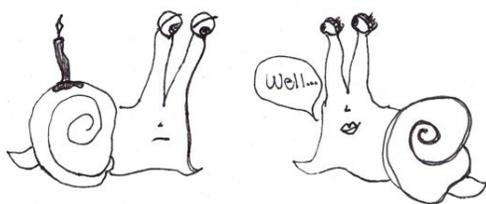
I start singing these words:

*O Holy Spirit, come to me in my weakness.  
Light of the stars, sweet music of the ocean  
Break like the morning into my darkness,  
sweet Jesus.  
Not by the might of the spirit of power  
But by the light of the power of spirit...*

That's a pretty good song, I tell myself. I think people will like it.   
– Jim Nail



**Modern Ark** (watercolor)   
– Margaret Kellermann



## Tell us Your Story

For Chapter 9, we're asking people for stories about times they were afraid to do something they felt led to do. We want stories about times when fear kept people from following the Light AND times when people were afraid but followed the Light anyway. Whatever the outcome of your story, it will be a gift to the community.

Query: *In following the Light, when were you led to do something that was scary to think about?*

We welcome stories in words, photos, art, music, video, or. . . ? We publish stories as told to the extent that they fit within our guidelines (see Guidelines )

Story Deadline: 9/23/12

Light Brigade\*

Sally Gillette, Clerk

Mike Huber, Recording Clerk

Carol Bosworth

Peg Edera

Pat Matthews

Julie Peyton

Cindy Stadel

[mindingthelight@gmail.com](mailto:mindingthelight@gmail.com)

\*Members of Story Committee

*"God is really another artist.  
He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the cat. He has no real style. He just goes on trying other things."*

Pablo Picasso

### Meeting God in Technicolor

It's fascinating for me to describe how a quilt comes to being: it begins as a subconscious collection of four or five fabrics, usually, and then I start to become aware of the collection that's been swelling, and begin to do it more consciously. The quilt you see in the picture is a collection of fabrics from many sources: fabrics acquired on trips, fabric cut from clothing that didn't fit after all, clothing bought at the thrift store specifically to cut up, and fabrics found in the attic that had been waiting for years for a commission into the world. The quilt always comes to being through a group of colors calling out.

This blue, turquoise and citrine swell happened during the recent upheaval of moving and change in our family, and the colors, textures and arrangement required in this process became a place of nurture, confirmation, and comfort for me as I experienced and created so much uncertainty during this time. I find it interesting that when I researched the meaning of these colors they were all themes of truth, calm, and clarity.

God and spiritual connections come to me through color and harmony so frequently that it is amazing to have a final product such as this one close to me. To make it more personal for the benefit of myself, now, and my kids in the future, I stitched into the quilting of the layers the

names of about 20 folks who have been especially supportive and encouraging through this time of change, many of whom are from the West Hills Friends Community. When I feel sad or uncertain, I nestle down into this quilt and feel covered by the love of my friends and especially, my Friends. I thank God frequently for the gift of this quilt and all it represents. 

– Anne Marie Bowman Bracco



*The finished quilt in my room in Newberg.*  
[See another photo at [www.mindingthelight.org](http://www.mindingthelight.org)]

*So YHWH, God, formed from the soil every living-thing of the field and every fowl of the heavens and brought each to the human, to see what he would call it; and whatever the human called it as a living being, that became its name.*

Gen. 2:19, Schocken Bible  
(Five Books of Moses).



### You Have Stories to Tell!

Everyone has stories, whether or not they are writers. Your stories are important to the community, and we hope that you will share yours.

Please let us know if you have a story but don't consider yourself a writer, don't have time, don't feel well, or any other reason. We would love to send a story catcher to record your story.

If you can't come to us, we will come to you :)



Our Journal is Printed on 100%  
Post-Consumer Recycled Paper

### Publication Guidelines

Your stories can be submitted in any publishable format: narratives, poetry, songs, art, other.

Word stories: must be 500 words or less, and written in the first person by a member or attender of West Hills Friends. Stories should be submitted in text format in the body of an email addressed to: [office@westhillsfriends.org](mailto:office@westhillsfriends.org).

Original paintings, photos, and other art can be submitted on paper or emailed in JPG format.

Original music and videos should be submitted as links to websites like YouTube or Vimeo.

### I Like to Work at Night in My Shop

I like to work at night in my shop.  
I like the strong directed light  
spreading evenly in the grain  
of the work at hand,  
and in the patient glittering edge  
followed  
through night toward radiant  
foothills. 

– Derek Lamson, 1982

### Interconnections

When I read the query for this chapter, I began thinking about my artistic and creative journeying. I love to paint, collage, sculpt, perform, write, speak, assemble, weave, design, sew. I wanted to tell a great story of something I had created and how it had been in response to the Light. But while trying to narrow in on one specific creation, I realized that all of the creative work I do is in response to the Light within.

I realized that all of the creating I do is really about creating connections. My art connects me to the Mystery inside me, and the Mystery beyond me. It also connects me with the Mystery in others. It connects me to the Light, to the color light is reflected in, to materials and textures, to all of creation. Creating connections is what the Light within moves me to do. I connect the materials,

myself, the Source, meaning, those who read or view or hear my work.

One thing I love about collage, found object sculpture and assemblage is that I am able to connect disparate and seemingly unconnected objects. I like to find the relationships between different pomades and object, objects that have been found, created, discarded and retrieved. I love to take something that has been discarded or deemed useless or without value and find value, worth and beauty in it.



### Praise

The title of this stained glass piece is "Praise". It is approximately 36x48 and was created in awed response to the incredibly strong, brave, resilient, loving and faithful women with whom I was communicating at the time...whose infectious joy and zeal for life begged to be honored. 

– Annie Witherspoon

[Note: See a much larger copy of this image at [www.mindingthelight.org](http://www.mindingthelight.org)]

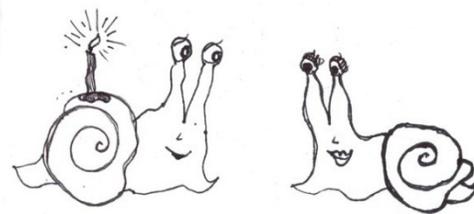
Something in that object resonates with me and that is the first link. Then I connect it to other materials, to meaning, to emotion, to other people. When I speak or perform I feel such a connectedness to those watching and listening.

I find such peace, joy and bliss in the awareness of the interconnectedness that is life, that is reality. I love to see life as constellations in a gallery, all the connections and interconnections. I hope my creative work furthers and honors that interconnectedness by connecting the materials,

myself, the Source, and those who read or view or hear my work. 

– Mica Coffin

Do not remember the former things,  
Nor consider the things of old.  
Behold, I will do a new thing,  
Now it shall spring forth;  
Shall you not know it?  
I will even make a road in the  
wilderness  
And streams in the desert.  
Isaiah 43:18-20



### Lightsnails

– Mindy Dillard