

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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Elise Boulding’s “The Challenge of Nonconformity” first appeared in the October 1987 *Friends Journal*.

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Cover Illustration by
Melanie Weidner
melanie@createstudio.com

Book Design and Production by
Robert Leuze
Robert Leuze & Associates
245 West 104th Street, 16 C
New York, NY 10025
RLeuze@rcn.com
212-662-3252

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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,” II, *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.



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.

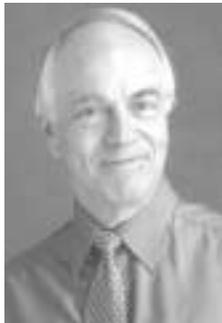
George Lakey (1991: “Our Bodies, Our Elves”) sought a vision of the new creation. He emphasizes, in six general areas, gifts that lesbians, gays, and bi’s can give to the Society of Friends and the larger world; the areas are embodiment (in a human body); the erotic (as a bridge to spiritual experience); 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



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

Laying Down the Weapons 'Round Our Hearts

JOHN CALVI

Plenary Address

Friends General Conference

July 6, 1990

Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Dear Great and Holy Spirit, be with me now as I do this work. May I be guided by your wisdom that I may receive comfort, healing, and protection, that I may be a vessel for your love. Thank you for this opportunity to love.

This is how I go to work in the morning. And it is a great honor and excitement for me to be with you tonight. It's also a bit too much—a bit too overwhelming—and I wouldn't want to do it without some help from friends in high places.

I am genuinely amazed at how much I don't know. There are all kinds of things that I truly do not know about. I was about 26 years old before it finally occurred to me that the second hand on the clock was called that because it showed the seconds. I kept wondering why it wasn't the third hand.

© 1990 John Calvi. Songs: "A Little Gracefulness," "Carry and Burn," "Maria," "Hello Sun" © John Calvi.

But I do know about healing. I know about it because of working in the AIDS epidemic for seven years, and working for the last two years with refugees who have been tortured. I am going to speak to you tonight from my experience and only from my experience. I want to talk with you about some prerequisites for healing for an individual, for a meeting, for a situation. I speak to you not only as a certified massage therapist and a Quaker healer, but also as someone who has survived both rape as a young child and a family that was ruined by alcoholism and violence. I speak to you as a gay man, married under the care of my meeting, living in a world that destroys gay people every day.

Surrendering

One of the first things that is needed for healing is surrender, surrendering to deep feeling—feeling the depth of sadness and of loss, the depth of terror, of anger—feeling very, very deeply, more deeply than is comfortable, more deeply than people would like to, ever.

That great surrender that all of us have felt at some time in meeting, when we finally saw that thing that we weren't really wanting to look at. The surrender at the times when an entire meeting saw the thing that was in the way that so many people had been unable to see for a long time. So often I feel like I'm sitting in a chair in the corner with my hands over my eyes, complaining to God that I can't see anything.

Among us are some very sensitive people. Very often we call these people hypersensitive, and when they are not in our presence, we call them hysterical. I tend to be an independent sort of person who does things on my own. I really am not very good at huddling in a group trying to make group decisions. And when people get very sensitive in their thoughts and feelings and become physically demonstrative in the way they are expressing themselves, part of me wants to say, "Shut up and roll up your sleeves." But with hindsight, I can see very clearly that it is the extremely sensitive people who let us know what's going on deep within ourselves. I need to keep reminding myself, Blessed are the tenderhearted, for they reveal to us our deepest feelings.

When people are having hard times, one of the first things that happens is that they start to close down in their bodies—in the ways that they move, and in the ways that they talk to one another. People actually get smaller in their bodies because times are hard. The idea of surrendering, of feeling deeply, sounds like

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leaning into a punch. But it is these very tenderhearted people who are the first to do it. That act of surrender is the first piece of work—feeling how deeply we are hurt, how much trouble we are in, feeling deeply how much danger is around us. That's always the first work, because we can't go anywhere without that initial assessment. Are we into it up to our armpits? Yes. OK, now that we have that clarity we can begin some work.

Let me sing you a song that I wrote some years ago when I first was beginning to work in the AIDS epidemic. I was looking to put together my rule of things I needed to remember so that I could recall, while in the midst of very painful situations, how to make a gift without taking on the sadness and despair of that situation.

A Little Gracefulness

Sometimes I remember
 Sometimes I forget
 You want to do something wonderful
 It takes a little gracefulness
 It takes a little quiet
 It takes a little joy, joy, joy
 Takes some believing in good
 Takes a little gracefulness
 To let the love in, in, in
 Takes a little gracefulness
 To let it go again
 It takes a little sadness
 And feeling your stuff, stuff, stuff
 To feel when way opens
 Takes a little gracefulness
 I believe there's plenty
 I believe that you care
 I believe in me
 And the sun that's always shining somewhere
 Takes a little quiet
 Takes a little joy, joy, joy
 Takes some believing in good
 Sometimes I remember.

Inviting Angels

In my experience, the next part of healing is inviting angels. I have a sense that each of us has some friends in high places, and I don't go to work without them. I really don't. All of us have friends all around us all the time. It's very important during hard times to sit still and say, "If you would be so kind, I need some

more understanding. I need some patience. Maybe I need a little bit more time.”

Very often trouble comes in a form a little bit like playing tennis: You know, they hit the ball at you, and it’s coming down over here. And what do you know about getting the racquet over here to get the ball back to the other side? Trouble can seem like some sort of “life quiz.” “OK, I’m sending you this trouble. What do you know? What do you know about life?” And when we don’t know enough, we can say, “Excuse me, about this quiz you sent, I know that this is the second time I’ve flunked it. Could we, like, do the lesson again a little bit? Once? Slower?”

Sometimes I imagine that my angels are like my great uncles and aunts, sitting around a card table up on a cloud. And one of them says, “I know! Let’s get him ready to do this thing over here!” But another one says, “Oh, no! He’s not ready for that! Look at him. Look what happens to him when he doesn’t find parking in front of the laundromat. He’s not ready for that big thing over there.”

If you’re going to invite your angels, you need a certain level of softness. When I began doing my work, I really did not have very much faith in angels. Then one day I was working with a healer, a wonderful woman by the name of Jean Schweitzer, who could look into your body as easily as if she were looking into a milk bottle. And she told me, “Well, you have some very big angels with you, and you can always ask for help.”

One day I was not ready to do all the work that came to me: three people, one right after another, who were in very big trouble. But it was very much like the parable of fishes and loaves: The energy that I needed to do what was being asked of me came to me, so that I could make a beautiful gift to them. Afterward I sat down in meditation and prayer and said, “Now see here, what is going on? I don’t really believe in angels, but I could sort of feel you there, so I wish you would show up and talk to me, because I’m going down this road in a way that I don’t understand.”

The angels wouldn’t show up until I cried—until I felt the depth and the deep quiet that one needs to hear angels. Some angels came right through, and they said, “Now see here, we’re going to get a lot of work done.” “Well, what am I supposed to do?” “All you have to do is stay soft. In your tenderness, you can receive these gifts, and you can give them to others, and you must invite us.”

Let me sing you a song by the name of “Carry and Burn.” I wrote it a while ago when I was up in Vermont, hauling firewood. This song came to me when I was looking at the reality that as someone who is making a gift of healing, my

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work is identical to that of the person whom I am working on. Everyone who is looking to be of help and everyone who is helped are involved in the same task, being as graceful and as wise as they can be in the situation, which invariably is organized against grace and wisdom.

Carry and Burn

Carry and burn,
Carry and burn.
This firewood I gather
To carry and burn.
And my love is the same,
Oh, my love is the same.
We gather and gather
To carry and burn.

I'm afraid of the fire;
It will change me, I know.
What will be left
When I pass through?
Of the me I know now,
What will be new?

Like any love it undresses you,
And gives too much,
And asks for more than you have.
And the view from here,
And the view from here
Is more, more than one chooses.

Receiving Messages

I have always been very reluctant to receive messages, because I know that it's going to mean more work. When I first began to receive what I understood to be clear messages, I had a great deal of reluctance to hear them. I thought, "Well, now, I'm just a nice working-class Italian-American kid, and I really would prefer not to do anything too New Age-y or too old-fashioned." But, you know, if the voices get loud, they get loud.

When people are having hard times, when a meeting is having a hard time, and people want to get up and do something, then people *do* want to get up and do something. People want to get up and change something. They want to blame other people. It is even more important to sit down and be quiet; to listen very carefully; and to try not to hear oneself.

Messages are very sneaky things. They come in ways that you don't expect. I imagine that just about everybody here has bumped into some large thing that

was a very clear message to slow down. Once upon a time, I was in a thrift store. I saw an entire rack of ancient suitcases, and all of a sudden I knew that I was supposed to buy some of them. So here I am, standing in the Salvation Army having an argument with God. And I said, “Now! What do I need with six antique Samsonite suitcases? I mean, really! I do not have enough money to fill up the car with gas. I’m not going anywhere.” But it was a clear message, and I couldn’t deny it. I didn’t have a place to put six suitcases, but I bought them and took them home. They sat there; I looked at them; and I said, “What are you for? What are we supposed to do?”

I had been doing my work for about a year and a half, and within a month or so I began to receive invitations to travel, to go and teach about my work, to go into situations where organizations are working in crisis—sanctuary work, prisons, rape crisis centers, AIDS organizations—and teach how a person can go into a situation that looks hopeless and make your contribution and bless it and let it go, and go and rest and come back full so you can do more; and not take on the despair of the situation. I now have twenty suitcases, and I’m on the road about three or four months of the year. I do lots of traveling. Just about every time before I was to take a big trip, I would find a new suitcase that I was supposed to buy. The last time I bought a big suitcase was just before I met Marshall, my spouse. And I thought, “Oh, I must be going on a big trip.” And I certainly was.

But messages also come in ways that are not funny and even in ways that scare you. Let me tell you about one of those times for me, a time when it was very, very hard to listen. About two years ago in March, Marshall and I had just moved to Washington, D.C., from Los Angeles, and we were very happy together. After we had moved in, he said to me, “My armpits feel achy.” He was thinking that maybe it was from the moving and so much lifting. Marshall didn’t know anyone at that time with AIDS, but I knew that one of the first signs of AIDS very often is a swelling of the lymph nodes. And I very calmly turned to him and said, “Oh, how long have they been bothering you?” “Oh, about a week.” “Well, let’s go see a doctor. It’s important. Let’s go see a doctor.”

BEFORE WE GOT TO A
DOCTOR, I SAT DOWN
IN PRAYER. NO, IT
WASN’T REALLY PRAYER,
I SAT DOWN IN FURY. I
SAID, “HOW DARE YOU!
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THIS WORK, AND YOU
SEND ME THIS LOVE,
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WORLD. I THOUGHT WE
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Before we got to a doctor, I sat down in prayer. No, it wasn't really prayer, I sat down in fury. I said, "How dare you! How dare you! Don't you dare threaten me like this. I go through all of these fires. I hand over my life to do this work, and you send me this love, this person whom I love more than anyone else in the world. I thought we had a deal. Don't you remember that day I looked up in the sky, and I said, 'You've given me all these gifts, but you haven't sent me a lover. I think I can deal with that, but you should send more money.' I thought we had an understanding, and now you're doing this? If this man is hurt, I quit the company. I'll get a new boss. I'm out of here."

I was furious, furious. And always the message came back, "Feel this. Feel this deeply." So we went to the doctor and took the HIV antibody test. In that week it took for the results to come back, I came around to a place of saying "All right, all right, I'm sorry I threatened you, but now I will tell you the truth. If you hurt this man, if this man suffers and you take him from me, my heart will be broken, and I will not be able to do this work anymore. I cannot go out on this limb and see the suffering that I see and have people's pain pass through me, because I will be so full of my own." And the message kept coming back, "Feel this deeply."

We both tested negative for the virus, and all that was needed was a little medication for a bacterial infection. The following week I was invited to begin my work with Comadres of El Salvador to work on refugees who have been tortured. And I said, "Oh. Feel this deeply. Feel what it's like to have the person you love most in the world threatened and maybe taken away, and your own life endangered. Feel this deeply, because now I give you the opportunity to go and work with people who live with this every day, who have memory of the things that people fear most in the world, that themselves and the people that they love most in the world will be hurt beyond all that can be imagined."

Let me sing you a song that I wrote. When I began to work with Comadres, I had a hard time finding refugees who had been tortured to work on. I went to Amnesty International, and I didn't say I was a healer because I know that scares people. I said I was a massage therapist, which I am. And they sent me over to the Guatemalan Physicians Health Task Force. And they sent me over to the Hispanic Mental Health Clinic, and they sent me over to the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs. And I thought, "Well, this is not working." So I called up a good Catholic communist friend of mine, and I said, "Mary, you know what I do. Can you find me someone to work on?" She said, "Let me make a few calls." In a day or two I was down at the office of Comadres and met a beautiful, strong, little, brown woman, Maria Tula. Her husband had been murdered. She had been abducted and tortured twice, and gang-raped by soldiers when she was 7 ½ months pregnant. Part of her torture was to have a knife scored along her belly accompanied with threats to take her baby from her. She later had that baby in prison.

When the international outcry arose that one of the founders of Comadres was in prison being hurt, President Duarte brought her out of prison for a press conference and said, "You can see that she is perfectly well. We have dropped all of the charges against her. We see that she is perfectly innocent, and you can see that we have democracy here in El Salvador." Maria marched up to the microphone and said, "I was tortured by this general right over here."

She made her way to the United States. She was helped across the border by Quakers. I sat down with her, and through a translator, I said, "Maria, I have a big spirit following me, and sometimes when I touch people, they stop hurting, and they sleep better, and their sadness leaves them." And her eyes got very big, and I thought, "Oh, she's looking at me to see if I'm crazy." She said, "It would be very beautiful if you could make this go away. When can we start?" And we've been working for two years now. This is a song that just came out the other day as I was driving along.

Maria

See Maria, isn't she lovely?
 See her watching her children as they play.
 Looking in their eyes, she sees tomorrow.
 See Maria, isn't she lovely?
 See Maria, strong and brave.
 What the soldiers did to her, it breaks my heart to say.
 Now she tells the story in all of our churches
 And the soldiers keep killing,
 And we know who pays them.
 Maria, Maria, Maria of El Salvador,
 If they send her back,
 We'll all die a little, a little, a little.

The Dance between Hope and Fear

I want to share one more idea with you. And really I think that of everything that I have had a chance to experience, this is the most important. For every person, for every situation, when one is looking to get well from trauma, from hurt, from some sort of serious hard time, there is a common element. It is the dance between hope and fear. This dance occurs for every person who's looking to get well. On the one hand, you have fear—this thing we learn as we go through life: We bump into something and are afraid that we are going to be hurt again. It's very pushy. It's very loud and aggressive. You can hear it in people's voices all the time. It's learned; it's not original equipment; and it's very logical following hard times, following a time when you've been hurt deeply.

And on the other hand we have hope, not an idea very well understood in our culture. It is confused with wishing. Hope is a very specific idea. It's a very old word. Its original definition is "the desire for goodness with the expectation that it can be achieved." That's very powerful. Everyone has hope. The child's turning to suckle is not an idle act of survival; it reveals a desire to thrive, to be in the world. It's an act of hope. So are children's many questions in the classroom about how the world works.

Hope is a passion, and everyone has lots of it. Everyone has all that they need,

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to do the work that's in front of them. Let me tell you one story about hope to show you how absolutely strong it is. One day I was doing massage on a fellow named Mikel. He was very ill with AIDS. He was close to dying, and he said, "Are you working on anyone else this week?" I said, "Yes, I'll be working with Sabina." "Oh, what's going on for her?" "Well, fifteen or twenty years ago someone came and stole Sabina's youngest child and murdered her. And that sadness now is in her back, and her back hurts. And when we work, she grieves that loss, and the pain goes away." And

Mikel said, "Oh, my God, I could never deal with anything like that."

And later that week, I was working with Sabina, and she said, "Are you working on anyone else this week?" And I said, "Yes, I'll be working with Mary Alice." "Oh, what's going on for her?" "Well, about a year ago, on one very, very bad morning, she was raped at knifepoint, shot by a rifle, and then blown up by a bomb, all in a couple of hours." Sabina said, "Oh, my God, I could never deal with anything like that."

And then I was working with Mary Alice later that week, and she said, "Are you still helping that poor man with AIDS to die?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Oh, I could never deal with anything like that."

So you see, because hope is so strong, we can each of us deal with a lot of things; it's just that no one wants to volunteer. Hope is very, very strong. It's a passion, and everyone has piles of it. The problem is that it gets covered over by discouragement and pain and all these other things. But hope is very strong and has a very particular job in healing.

Some sort of monster has shown up. The you-know-what has hit the fan, and now we are in trouble. We're hurting or there's great danger or there's some sort of trauma going down for a person or a group or for an organization or something. And Fear said, "Aha! You see? I told you there were monsters out there, and you

weren't being careful, and now I'm sitting down to the driver's seat, and we're going to have some rules. We're not going out at night. We're going to sit up straight. We're going to fold our hands. We're not going to say too much. Grrrrr. I'm in charge." And that's Fear. Pushy. Very logical. And it closes all the doors and windows to protect us from a monster. It closes all the same doors and windows that our goodies come through, all the things that nourish our spirit and our bodies.

And Hope comes over and says, "Now, Fear, I understand why you're doing this. I saw the monster, too, and I know that there were damages. But, frankly, you have made life so small that I am bored to tears in here. Could we open up a window? Could we draw the drapes? Could we come out from under the futon for just five minutes and stop screaming? Could we go for a walk? See a friend? Have some ice cream? A little something? I need something. We need more space in here. We need some light. We need some fresh air." And that is the job of Hope: to lobby within the legislature of the heart for space, to come over to Fear, who's trying to run the entire show, and rattle the armor, and say, "I think we can crack a window and sneak in some goodies here."

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The place we see this most often is when someone close to us dies. And you have a friend who's sort of a good friend, but not a really good friend, and you're telling that person what happened, and you talk about your sadness. But it's just talking, it's just telling

the story. And then you have a very good friend, someone whom you trust, someone whose love you find credible. He or she comes and sits with you, you tell the same story, and the next thing you know, you are a puddle of tears, swept away by your grief. That's your hope saying, "Aha! So-and-so is in town, and we can let it rip." This dance between hope and fear goes on.

That's why the nature of healing is cyclical. None of it happens all at once. There's trauma, and people do some initial work to assess the damages and see what needs doing. They make some decisions, they take some actions, and then comes around a time to rest. That rest is very important. Then comes time to do some work again, to take another assessment of the damages, take another look and see what needs doing, and then make some more decisions, take some more action. Hope comes over just every once in a while. It doesn't do it all the time. You can't do your work all the time, it's too hard. It's too hard to do your

healing work all the time. You have to rest. And the rest is just as important as the work. They go together. And that's very true for those of us who are looking to be of help to other people, as well as those of us who are looking to be of help to ourselves. And that dance between hope and fear is going on all the time, for every one who is looking to get well. If you watch very carefully in yourself and in your meeting, you will see that there is a moment sometime, someplace, where hope shows up. And that's the time to give it vitamins. That's the time to encourage it with our tenderness and with our truth and honesty.

Let me sing you one last song. Let me get the guitar here.

Hello Sun

Rose looks out from her blanket,
And she wonders how she'll get through the day.
You see, Tommy died last summer,
And she's afraid she'll never laugh again.
Now she could take her own life
Or stick around and see what's next.
She looks out on another new day.
She says, "Good morning, Dawn,
It's so good to see you today.
Hello, Sun, it's me again.
Do you think you could come out and play?"

Carlos looks out at the old car he's been sleeping in,
And he smiles just to be alive.
He's lost everything but a little joie de vivre
That he keeps in what's left of his mind.
Now he and the sun have come round again.
He looks out at his old friend and says,
He says, "Good morning, Dawn,
It's so good to see you today.
Hello, Sun, it's me again.
Do you think you could come out and play?"

Tom was surrounded by shining,
And he felt himself drifting away.
The moment he died, a journey began
And he wonders if he'll come round this way.
Now he'll miss this old world
But that body was hell.
He looks into the light, and he says,
He says, "Good morning, Dawn,

It's so good to see you today.
 Hello, Sun, it's me again.
 Do you think you could come out and play?"

And every morning around the world,
 As life begins again,
 And the joy and the pain
 And the beauty and the sorrow
 Come swirling 'round everyone's way.
 Oh, what will you say when tomorrow comes around,
 And what did you say today?
 Did you say, "Good morning, Dawn,
 It's so good to see you today.
 Hello, Sun, it's me again.
 Do you think you could come out and play?"

I am so grateful to be with you this week. I am so grateful to all the many people who work so hard to bring this Gathering together, who work for years for each Gathering. I'm so grateful to the people who brought the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt to FGC this year. If you haven't seen it yet, don't miss it. It is stunning. I'm so grateful to all the people who made it possible to bring it here, especially John Meyer and Lyle Jenks.

The prayer that I opened with is the prayer that I use every time I do some work on someone. And when I finish a piece of work, I stand back and I say,

Dear Great and Holy Spirit, please wash me. Thank you for this opportunity for loving, and please keep me ready for more.



John Calvi is a Quaker healer with spiritual gifts for releasing pain. Beginning in 1982, he has worked with tortured refugees, people with AIDS, and women surviving sexual abuse. Teaching internationally as well as throughout the U.S., his workshops on healing and avoiding burnout have been acclaimed by professional caregivers, families, and meetings. John's song, "A Little Gracefulness," was recorded by The Short Sisters, available from Black Socks Press. John's ministry as a Released Friend was for 15 years under the care of his home meeting in Putney, Vermont (New England Yearly Meeting). His marriage to Marshall Brewer is also under the care of Putney Meeting. John and Marshall have lived in Putney since 1990.



Marshall Brewer

John Calvi