

"Answering the Call to Heal the World", by Patience Schenk, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #383

Friends speak of being "led" and of being "called." I use both terms. I like "call" because it is common in the greater Christian tradition and implies a major direction for our lives. On the other hand, "led" suggests an intimacy with the Spirit in an ongoing way. A perusal of George Fox's journal shows him writing of "openings," of being "moved," of the Lord "leading him." John Woolman's journal tells us he felt "inner drawings toward...", that he acted "under a feeling," and that "truth required" him," as well as simply, "I was led."

All of these terms imply hearing the still small voice within, something deeper and truer than simple individual choice. They speak of something different from conscience, which is a commitment to apply at universal ethical principles to particular situations....

While our gifts vary, it is interesting to note that friends as a group often demonstrate a particular set of them. Here is how Adam Curle, writing on peacemaking, describes the strengths Friends have demonstrated:

"Friends have developed what might be termed a style which is fairly widely recognized both within and outside the Religious Society of Friends... such as the capacity to listen patiently and quietly; to be equally at home in the village and the Cabinet office; to have sympathy with the "bad guys" as much as with the "good ones"; to speak firmly in high quarters without causing alienation; to keep on good terms with both parties in a dispute; to inspire confidence and trust-by being impartial, discrete, unself-seeking and truthful; to be skilled in clarifying blurred perceptions; to have constructive sympathy and compassion for the pains and confusions of others; to communicate well cross-culturally; to be constantly concerned with the fundamental issues of peace; to be, finally, practical and competent."

Many different kinds of people are needed. The same is true for our meetings and communities. Wouldn't it be terrible if everyone had teaching gifts and no one could fix the plumbing?

.... we feel joy and know we are faithful when we use our gifts. When we do not, we feel unfulfilled. We need to use what we have been given..... so we must identify our gifts and then we must overcome a resistance to using them. This does not mean that we will necessarily feel comfortable showing what we can do. We will do it anyway and, we will grow into the tasks required of us.