



Spiritual Journey: Sample Visiting Friend Presentations

“Spiritual Journey” by David Bantz
for Chena Ridge Friends Meeting 2013-11-10

I am a Quaker and member of the Religious Society of Friends. I am going to describe something of how I have lived, what I have done, and how my perceptions have changed over time that seem to relate to me being Quaker. But I confess I do not think of my life as a journey progressing from stage to another, let alone having some clearly delineated trajectory. So, it is only in this telling that it is a journey.

Among my earliest memories are browsing and reading books on my parents’ bookshelves. Those shelves contained novels, biographies, and especially - in my recollection - books on events and history of the Second World War. I recall being completely absorbed in memoirs of adventure, comradery, courage and purpose among soldiers and submariners, then pages later revulsed by violence and death. I particularly remember viewing with incomprehension - then dawning horror - graphic images from the liberation of Nazi death camps. I have retained my sense of awe at the vast range of human capability, and the determination to understand the conditions that enable us to live peacefully and joyfully - what I would much later learn to call living “in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.”

My father grew up a Quaker - son of a recorded minister of gospel - but did not raise his children to be. My sister and I attended Sunday School in my mother’s denomination. I struggled from the beginning with Bible stories. Fortunately, neither my family nor the church they sent us to endorsed Biblical literalism. I instinctively understood and reinterpreted stories much as I did Aesop’s fables or Grimm’s fairy tales - stories that dramatized some instructive point or “moral” rather than literal history or revealed truth. I was of course aware of the manifold ways in which one part of the Bible or description of God seems at odds with others. I did not know of at the time, and was not near clever enough, to think of the Bible as, in Karen Armstrong’s helpful phrase, the history of God - that is, a history of how humans have struggled to understand the divine and give meaning to life.

I came of age during the height of the struggles for racial civil rights and to end the Vietnam War. I went to school at a place my parents were sure was infested with communists; I confirmed their fears when I became enamored of “radicals” like Martin Luther King and Dick Gregory, who spoke of love conquering hate and the history’s long arc of justice. I spent a ridiculous amount of time on an undergraduate project that had me interviewing and profiling pacifists. Volunteering through the local Friends Meeting I helped counsel young men wanting to avoid the draft or get out of the military. I determined that I was a conscientious objector to war, volunteered for the draft, and began civilian alternative service.

[During this period I had a brief encounter that has stayed with me. A prominent local activist teased me that pacifists had thought of themselves as radical but must



be taken aback by the more radical tenor of the anti-Vietnam War movement of which he was a part. But I had read up on pacifists. I knew that in World War I, some U.S. pacifists who refused to serve in the military were tried and sentenced to death (though those sentences were not carried out), but that those who refused to serve because they wanted the other side to win received only temporary incarceration until the end of the war. It seemed clear to me then - as it does today - that pacifism is rightly seen as the ultimate threat to war making and militarism.]

In short, as I came of age I embraced Peace and Equality and became aware of Quakers as more than a curiosity of my ancestry. But I did not at that time go very far in my embrace of Friends. I was perhaps a “fellow traveler” or friend of Friends, but did not worship with Friends. I did keep reading and reflecting and revising my understanding. I learned a little more about Friends and my father’s history.

At a certain point in my career I was able to join other volunteers interested in developing ways for technology to transform higher education - to empower those with different learning styles, to make information more readily available and useful to everyone, and to connect students with research and scholarship. I was fascinated by how productive a small group of people could be with none of the trappings of prestige and power all too familiar in the usual workplace. We had no bosses in this work, we received no wages or fees, but there was palpable joy and creativity in this collaboration. As sometimes happens, this wonderful invisible college came to an abrupt end when a key sponsoring group re-organized and imposed new “leaders” and top-down direction. Only then did I fully comprehend how important the gentle and quiet facilitation of one of the organizers was to our work. He understood how to bring peace and equality into a working group of people, he engaged each of us in our terms without judgment or posturing, and he reminded us gently to relate our work to the larger goals we embraced. He engendered in me a somewhat late-blooming interest in intentional peaceful group processes. I discovered only then that the person whose facilitation I now see to have been critical to this wonderful work was a long-time Friend, and this way of working was part and parcel of his faith.

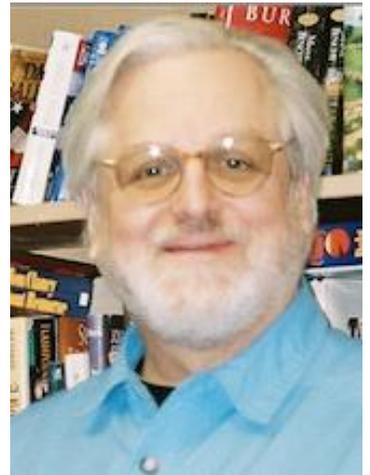


There were of course other people, other events, other reading that led me to embrace the goal of integrating what I do into a coherent and consistent way of living, and of eliminating unnecessary clutter and ostentation. Suffice it to say that at the mid-point of my career I stumbled into an appreciation of Integrity and Simplicity and became aware of Quakers as embodying and implementing these testimonies in daily work with the power to transform. But I still did not go very far in my embrace of Friends. I did by this time sense a real affinity with Friends and a desire to exemplify those testimonies myself, to emulate the behavior of Friends, which seemed to me to reflect how I preferred to be. I did begin to worship with Friends.

You may be thinking I am a slow learner. I might be. It was not until I had settled here in Fairbanks and became a regular attendee at our Meeting that I began to understand the need to supplement those aspects of Friends faith and practice I had already endorsed to include an active concern for Community. As Americans our individualism - especially males’ - is continuously pitched: be yourself, do your own thing,

decide what you want, be free to choose, be a leader, and so on. Sometimes it just doesn't occur to us that a full life requires Community, requires not merely practices on our part but active contribution to a community. In fact, I don't think I realized this fully before I was asked to be clerk of our Meeting. I was slightly intimidated but pleased to take on a new role. I wanted to give back to our Meeting, and I hoped our Meeting could be a force for good, but I was unsure of how I could fulfill those hopes. I confessed this nagging doubt to a Friend, along with my desire to be a good clerk-leader, who gave me the simple sound advice to "support the Meeting." I took that advice to heart and abandoned (or did to the best of my ability) a desire to lead or direct but rather reflect our collective best understanding of rightly ordered processes, to discern the sense of Meeting that arose from those processes, and to open myself to perceive ways in which our Meeting community might need support.

I am both grateful and fulfilled for having served our Meeting in various ways. It has led me to serve in other ways I would not have imagined, such as work with Friends Committee on National Legislation and American Friends Service Committee. That service has in many ways become my vocation and is how I glimpse the spiritual, the divine. As you have gleaned from this statement, my faith is not one of allegiance to metaphysical statements, still less adherence to ritual practices, and to some this may seem not faith at all. But acting faithfully to discern truths and work for communities of full equality, to act and live in light of our best but still evolving sense of what is the right way to live is what I understand to be to have faith, for it requires us to act and work not for precisely delineated ends, but to bring into being what we hope for, to act not necessarily on the basis of conclusive evidence, but on the evidence of things not seen.



"I am a Visiting Friend of FCNL and I'd like to tell you why." By Tom Betrand
for visiting friend conference call January 10th 2017

Christine has encouraged me to tell some stories of my own spiritual development, as a way of sharing how I might talk to others as a Visiting Friend in the months and years ahead.

I've spent my 71 years as a son and brother, a husband and a father (now six children, six and two-thirds grandchildren), as a teacher and naval officer, a university and foundation administrator, a citizen diplomat, a college president and practicing attorney, and more privately as a prayer minister. Through nearly two-thirds of my lifetime, 42 years, I have identified myself as a Friend and have used FCNL materials to support my advocacy work, both here and abroad.

My study, my work and my travels have convinced me that there is no better model in the world today of spirit-led democracy-building from the grass roots than FCNL's discernment process of going back to our local meetings and Friends organizations of all kinds every two years in order to glean our priorities for the upcoming new Congress.

How I -- like many other Quakers -- came to that conviction, and why it remains important to me personally, is the journey I want to share with you.

I don't know about you, but well before I became a convinced Friend, 42 years ago, I was led by queries which I have continued to ponder: *Why is that grown man weeping? Why is that little boy, not me, lying in the casket? What's my friend trying to say? How can I, like the preacher said, make a difference? What talents do I possibly have to use for others? Is wearing a naval uniform the only work I can do for world peace? Why should I be so lucky to be a privileged American, when so many around our nation and the world have so little and spend their days without the sense of privilege and safety that surrounds me? What can I do this day to extend these freedoms and blessings to others?*

Learning to empathize with and build bridges to other peoples, learning how to assist in their quest to achieve their freedom and their own form of democracy both in our nation and in the so-called "developing world" is the calling that has united my responses to those queries, the calling that has most fully engaged me for as long as I can remember. Citizen advocacy and citizen diplomacy are in my DNA. They are the themes that emerge for me from the disparate threads of which my life has been woven. And they are the themes that drew me to the Society of Friends and -- almost from my Quaker Day One -- to FCNL.

I grew up in a family of farmers and educators living on college campuses in Texas, New York, Nevada, and Georgia -- first the campuses of land grant universities and then the beautiful campus of a wonderful spirit-led, work-study college. Both of my parents were college teachers -- my father in rural sociology, my mother in art. I'm the oldest child of four -- my three sisters came right behind me within the span of four years and we have remained very close, though we live thousands of miles apart. We were brought up with the social gospel in the United Methodist Church. All four of us, like our parents, are educators and inveterate

volunteers, and we continue to challenge and inspire each other as we all enter or approach our seventh decade. My sisters are spiritually powerful and able. That upbringing anticipated my work with FCNL.

Why is that grown man weeping? My earliest memory is of tears coursing down the face of a man, not our father. His name was Popat, and he lived for a time with us. Popat was a Hindu who had come from his native India to attend graduate school at the land grant university in Texas where Dad was then a dean. Popat was telling the story of the assassination of his beloved leader, Mohandas Gandhi a couple of years earlier. Then a newly independent nation, India was trying to perfect a pluralistic democracy – as both India and the United States still are striving to do. Popat’s deep admiration for this man, Ganghi-ji, made a powerful impression on me. Popat was the first of many international students who visited in our home as my sisters and I grew up, teaching us about their own cultures and the aspirations of their nations.

Why is that little boy lying in the casket, not me? As my mother awaited my birth in late 1945, she lay in a private room in the hospital in Huntsville TX; that evening she noticed a black woman also awaiting delivery in a segregated public area. Mom insisted that the other woman be brought into the private area with her. Even in the deep South in the mid-1940s, that was not an unusual gesture for my mother, who was director of the Wesley Foundation in that city. Their two boys were born within the same hour – Jerry Lyn Mason and me. Within four years my parents and I were sitting beside Mr. and Mrs. Mason at Jerry Lyn’s funeral service. I have never forgotten that funeral music nor the experience of looking down into Jerry Lyn’s casket and wondering: *“Why you, not me? We were born together.”* My mother and Thelma Mason visited and corresponded until Mrs. Mason died in Compton CA many years later. I have never stopped asking when I learn of the death of someone of a person of color, *“Why you, not me?”*

What exactly is my friend saying? what is he meaning? The best educational experience of my early life came in 5th and 6th grade when I attended a public school in rural north Georgia and learned how to “listen to understand” another. I rode on the school bus each day with a friend who had cerebral palsy. I was the only kid in class who could understand Jimmy when he spoke, so I ended up writing his classroom exams for him, since his hand could not hold a pencil. He would speak his answers, some extensive ones, and I would write them down for him. We did that for two years before I changed schools. He later graduated as valedictorian of his college and became the Georgia governor’s first appointee to a statewide board to improve opportunities for physically and developmentally challenged citizens. Jim and I remained best friends for fifty years until his death in 2010. He taught me to listen to understand.

What did that preacher mean when he said I could make a difference? When I was 16, my family took a trip to New York City from the college campus in North Georgia where my father was president. While there, we went to Riverside Church to hear a sermon by Martin Luther King, Jr., and we went up to meet him after the service. This was 1962. Dad and he compared notes about how things were going back home in Georgia, and Dr. King looked into my eyes as I shook his hand and said, “You can make a difference, young man.” Like many others of my generation, I’ve spent 55 years trying to answer that remarkable preacher’s challenge.

Less than three years later, in late March 1965 as a college freshman in Houston TX, I drove through the night with two campus ministers and one other student to join the “Voters Rights” March between Selma and

Montgomery and to follow Dr. King up the state capitol steps in Montgomery. The following year, I was led to help organize a civil rights teach-in at Rice University and had the opportunity to introduce a young Texas state senator from Houston. From that day, Barbara Jordan became my model of an ideal legislator.

What best can I do for world peace? Because I graduated from college at the height of the Vietnam War, my draft board in a small town in Georgia did not grant me a draft deferment to accept my appointment as a Peace Corpsman in Nepal. As the son of a WWII naval officer now buried at Arlington National Cemetery, I accepted a commission into the Navy instead of being drafted. For me, like so many Americans of my generation, the Vietnam War became a personal *rorschach* test. After three years of active duty, the most part spent as a teacher of writing, literature and ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy, I came to feel that I should take off my Navy uniform and employ whatever talents and energy I had in the causes of securing peace and building justice in my own. So, I enrolled in law school in the fall of 1974 and was led to begin attending the then-tiny Friends Meeting in Charlottesville VA. That same fall I requested a clearness committee and was accepted as a member of the Society of Friends. I became the meeting's liaison to FCNL and began to learn coalition building among the historic peace churches, the Quakers, Mennonites and Brethren.

Within a year after my law school graduation I was working as a senior administrator at Emory University in Atlanta, helping shape a university committed to infecting students with a passion for justice and the capacity to see and appreciate the lot of others, what the novelist George Eliot called "binocular vision." I was lucky to be able to assist former president Jimmy Carter in the founding of the Carter Center as an integral affiliate of Emory and became caught up in his vision of democracy building.

I left Emory in 1991 to become an election monitor for the first free elections in the southern Caucasus region in the formerly Soviet republics of Armenia and Georgia and subsequently in South Africa, and after those elections stayed a while in those countries to do alternative dispute education work among young people in those nations under the *aegis* of the National Peace Foundation. It was a profound privilege to witness elderly Armenians and Georgians and South Africans when they voted freely for the first times in their lives. I was a visiting scholar at the University of the Western Cape at a time when colleagues there were writing a constitution for a racially diverse democracy when it was still but a dream. I lived for several months in the home of Desmond and Leah Tutu in 1992 and later accompanied Desmond to the polls in 1994 when that Nobel laureate cast the first ballot in his life, helping end apartheid and bringing Nelson Mandela into office. Subsequently, I was able to bring one of the Tutu daughters and another south African academic to teach at the college where I was president in North Carolina. Our aim in selecting international students at Brevard was to identify students determined to return to their nations and assume leadership positions there in building their democracies. We observed some remarkable examples of such emerging leadership. Always I escorted such students to Washington to observe our own democracy in action.

Later, working with the National Peace Foundation, I was involved in designing and administering federal exchange programs funded by the Open World program of the Library of Congress and the U.S. Department of State. Those programs brought various emerging leaders from formerly Soviet and Middle Eastern countries for residencies in communities throughout the United States, most frequently under the themes of democracy building and interfaith dialogue. I still believe those programs will bear fruit as years pass.

For the past six years, under the inspiration of our Peruvian-born daughter, I've applied my legal training to advocating for comprehensive immigration reform and representing immigration clients first in the mountains of western NC and, more recently, in Virginia Beach, where I'm active in building interfaith justice coalitions and as convener of the Virginia Beach Friends Committee on Peace & Social Justice.

This consistent theme of supporting democratic processes seems to emerge from all these special moments of epiphany in my life. It informs the stories I tell when I lobby legislators to remain true to the values of our own democracy. These are stories that crop up in my conversations about why FCNL's work in sustaining our democracy is so important.

We Friends are passionate about the causes we come to espouse, causes which galvanize the coalitions which we build. Such causes can be won and then lost again and then must be won again. We are learning this again as a new president assumes office and a new Congress convenes. We must continue to tell our stories.

Quaker process has come to be as important to me as the individual causes in which you and I have been engaged throughout our lives – as important as upholding civil rights, including the right to vote -- as important as ending the Vietnam War and our interminable successor wars in the Middle East and Central Asia – as important as achieving a nuclear freeze – as important as preventing atrocities and genocide through more effective communications among our various federal agencies – as important as achieving comprehensive immigration reform and whittling away at mass incarcerations through sentencing reform – as important even as achieving a “Great Turning” in the protection of our planet's ecosystem. Just as important as each and every one of these causes is the integrity of **our bedrock FCNL model of how we come together in the spirit and discern how to achieve “the World We Seek.”** Our process model is as important a cause as any of the others: this model of tapping the spirit-led discernment of all the local meetings and constituent organizations in the larger Religious Society of Friends and using our collective discernment to guide our work with individual legislators to build a more just society. That process is a cause in itself.

Year after year, we of FCNL prove to representatives of both parties that we can be relied upon to listen carefully, to speak our truth quietly and effectively, to do so without undue drama and in a way that connects with the aspirations of others, to discern moments and opportunities for bipartisan consensus, to be nimble in building coalitions, to model effective constituency communication and collaboration, and -- especially important -- to remain true to this bedrock process of going back to the grass roots every two years to discern priorities for the upcoming new Congress and then of watering and nurturing those grass roots with carefully formulated position papers written by the staff in Washington.

A brilliant example was the 2014 FCNL/AFSC White Paper on “Shared Security” which served as the inspiration of our Virginia Beach Peace & Social Justice Retreat several years ago and also inspired our interfaith partners in the Hampton Roads area.

Last November, I invited a friend and former colleague, who heads the Washington-based Board of Church and Society for one of the larger Protestant denominations, to join one of our evening sessions at the FCNL

annual meeting, and she commented to me how she felt Diane Randall and her staff are the most effective faith-based coalition builders in the nation's capital.

In my own work as a Friend over the past 42 years, the one consistently dependable, brilliant resource for my advocacy has been FCNL -- the effectiveness of its educational capacity and its advocacy programs, and the constantly helpful coaching and inspiration and leadership of its staff. There simply is no better model of spirit-led democracy-building in world today than FCNL's process of tapping our grass roots before we take collective action.

This past year I have spoken about the work of FCNL at the yearly meeting of the NC Yearly Meeting (Cons), at the interim body meeting of that yearly meeting, at a Coastal Friends Gathering of friends from scattered small meetings in eastern NC, and at Friends Meetings in Paris (France), Northeast Harbor, ME, Brevard (NC), and Annapolis MD, and have connected with the Peace & Social Justice committees at the Homewood Meeting in Baltimore and the Acadia Meeting on Mount Desert Island in Maine, which was the home meeting of our late, beloved Ed Snyder. On a trip to the west coast next week to visit my daughter, I will meet fellow Field Committee member Rick Herbert of the Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkeley and, I hope, Carolyn Reynolds Levering of Santa Cruz Meeting in California, I'll join members of the Pima Friends Meeting for the Women's March in Tucson AZ on January 21st, and I'll spend the afternoon of January 26 with Laura Ward Holliday of the Live Oak Friends Meeting in Houston, Texas.

With the Visiting Friends Program, FCNL has chosen to give a name to the spirit-led networking that you and I have naturally tried to do throughout our lives and has chosen to encourage us in this work. I'm grateful for and excited about the opportunity to serve in this way.

“A Spiritual Journey Toward FCNL” by Nancy Corindia
September 5th 2016

I was raised and confirmed, an Episcopalian, but shortly before graduating from high school, I no longer attended church. Going to church when I was young meant wearing my best clothes and patent leather shoes. (It was all about the shoes and the little ankle socks with the lace trim.) And, the church building drew me. It is a beautiful field stone building, with the classic red door with long wrought iron hinges. The chapel is especially beautiful, with a dark wood paneled, vaulted ceiling representing the hull of a ship, lustrous wooden benches, very colorful stained-glass windows, and beautiful alter vestments with gold embroidery. It is so quiet for such a large room, when no one else is there. I began to associate the smell of the wood and the books—hymnals and prayer books—with comfort and peace. I understood the feeling of reverence when I entered. The church’s best feature is a fabulous organ with huge pipes and a superb organist. There is nothing like the sound and feel of the reverberation in the deep chords of a good organ. The floor and your heart vibrate. The surroundings and the ceremony felt comforting and special. I was active in Sunday school, was a member of the alter guild, enjoyed the bible stories, old and new testaments, and memorizing prayers and hymns. Episcopalians have an order of nuns, and I fantasized about living that life for a long time. Everything is organized and prescribed. How lovely.

When I started high school, my father stopped going with us to church. The new minister was “too political”. “That is not his job.” I thought that perhaps it was his job, because after all church is about being a good person. The minister was talking about equality and our role in war. Doesn’t one’s religion inform their philosophy of life, their political views and behaviors? Thou shall not kill, love thy neighbor as thy self, and all are equal unto the Lord.

One Sunday as I read, in unison with the congregation, the Nicene Creed, I stopped. Did I believe what I was saying? Hmm. No. Is this a metaphor? Does everyone believe it at face value? I made an appointment with the minister. He said that one just had to have faith. Hmm. What does that mean exactly? I thought he was well educated in divinity and would speak to me in depth about history, metaphor, and parable, therefore I was surprised at his unsatisfying answer. I never went back and I can’t remember if it was to figure it out or not.

Through the late 60’s and early 70’s I was astounded that so many people would support a Jim Crow south. My only knowledge of Jim Crow was what I’d learned from *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. (I grew up in north suburban Boston.) The Vietnam War protests, and the women’s movement were happening. We sang. We protested. Conscientious Objection counseling and war tax resisting were everyday conversation. My first year of college was the same year as the shooting at Kent State. What happened to the freedom to assemble? How did it turn out that college students were the enemy? Why did it take me so long to understand that many felt there was exceptions to “though shall not kill” and “all men are created equal”? What took me so long to understand that others considered the rightness or wrongness of war? A righteous war?!

Words like, “if you aren’t part of the solution, you are part of the problem”, and “we are complicit in the events of the country and the world” spoke to me. People needed to protest on the street. But after that, change was going to happen on the floor of the House and Senate. At that time, my contribution was to teach

in the public schools. One of the roles of public schools had originally been to develop an informed citizenry. Well-informed citizens should know how the government works and so be better prepared to shape government and vote with understanding. Teaching appeared to be the part, in all of this, for which I had some talent.

Tom and I were married in an Episcopal church. An Episcopal minister and a Jesuit performed the ceremony. (Tom's mother was a Catholic.) This was just what you did and what our parents expected, but I was just playing the role—as was Tom. We had talked previously about being uncomfortable in the church and didn't attend after that.

Then, one night after listening to the news, where one after another, stories of horrible world event were delivered, I said to Tom that something was missing in my life. And, I thought it was spiritual. I didn't mean the churches, which hadn't worked, for us? Without a beat, Tom said he'd been to Mount Toby Meeting when he was at the University of Massachusetts and that a Quaker Meeting might be what we both were looking for.

Our first Meeting for Worship was at Cambridge Monthly Meeting. It was quiet. It was reverent without the necessity of words or ceremony. The experience was wonderful and powerful. One of my first and lasting impressions was the number of women who spoke out of the silence. In my previous experience, women were almost totally absent. We found what we were looking for.

I began my own private, "graduate level" course on Quakerism; read everything by and about Quakers and spoke to many. The concept of actions coming from the spirit spoke to my condition. Trying to model the Quaker testimonies by the way I lived and behaved was obviously something that would take a lifetime, but it was something that I could work toward. Holding someone in the Light was something I could do. Learning to listen to the spirit was something I could do.

We moved to Hanover, New Hampshire and found Hanover Meeting there. We met Friends who had struggled to help the course of peace in local, national, and world events, which influenced and inspired me. Elise Boulding was instrumental in the work of UNESCO and the Women's International Peace Organization. Lili Paxson drove an ambulance during WWII. Peter Bien went to Haverford at the time Rufus Jones was there, and he studied at Woodbrook, CO counselors, war tax resisters, women who had been arrested in acts of civil disobedience at anti-war demonstrations, and women with their children who had circled the Pentagon with many other women from around the country.

Four children later, thousands of Sundays teaching First Day School, driving Young Friends to retreats—and lots of other committees—, I am ready to do what others did for me when I was sitting on the floor in the First Day School room or carpooling. That is, support the Meeting in more ways. It's my turn. I've now been the clerk of Ministry and Worship and served as clerk of the Sarasota Monthly Meeting; and, currently a member of SEYM's Ministry and Worship committee.

I am one of the representatives from Florida to FCNL's general committee, a lobbyist, a liaison between Sarasota Monthly Meeting and FCNL. This is how I am led to work within our democratic process, to bring

about legislative change in the Quaker tradition. It's time for me to hold all those in our government in the Light, to write more often to my congressional members, lobby in D.C. and at home, make phone calls, encourage others to participate, and now share my ministry as a Visiting Friend.

My first experience of lobbying and attending the FCNL general committee's annual meeting, inspired, awed, and convinced me that FCNL was the place where I belong. I had that visceral feeling of a load being taken off my shoulders and a new peacefulness, with the realization that, contrary to popular belief; the democratic process in our country can work. Our legislators are easily available to their constituents, have well informed staff, and they want to hear from all of us. Our letters, and emails, are really read and phone calls listened to. Many citizens do avail themselves of these opportunities. Not the least of whom are Quakers on the Hill as FCNL.

Parker Palmer—one of my heroes—spoke one evening, perhaps at my first annual meeting. His topic was that of his book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. For me it was a pivotal moment. He was empowering in a way that I'd never experienced in connection to politics. Tension is implicit in politics, since the beginning of our democracy. Different views produce a tension that is healthy to finding a solution, by continued education and listening.

And, this is the quote that changed everything for me:

If a heart breaks *apart* into a thousand pieces, the result may be anger, depression, and disengagement. If it breaks *open* into greater capacity to hold the complexities and contradictions of human experience, the result may be new life. The heart is what makes us human—and politics, which the use of power to order our life together is a profoundly human enterprise. Politics in the hands of those whose hearts have been broken *open*, not *apart* helps us hold our differences creatively and use our power courageously for the sake of a more equitable, just, and compassionate world.

Being a Visiting Friend for me means: changing the negative image that lobbying currently has; letting Friends know there are little steps and larger steps to be taken that have a big impact on legislative change; and to generate hope for the future. Quakers are in it for the long haul. There is hope.