

South Central Yearly Meeting 2013
Theme: “Lead Kindly Light: Being Faithful”

“Sharing the Spiritual Commons in a Culture of Peace and a Political Economy of
Democratic Stewardship”

Keynote by Gray Cox – March 30, 2013

Prelude:

I am very grateful for being invited to share with you all here today. I feel led to share parts of my message in song including a round for us all at the end and a short meditation here at the start to help me enter into this moment.

“I’m gonna slow right down, so I can get there sooner.

I’m gonna slow right down, so I can get there today.

I’m gonna slow right down – maybe even come to a full stop.

Maybe if I come to a full stop I’m gonna get there right away.”

Introduction

I would like to share reflections on two great challenges I think we face in trying to live out the Quaker testimonies and some practical responses. The first challenge is to transform the dominant culture of conflict into a culture of peace. The second is to transform our political economy from a plutocratic national security state seeking ever more GNP into a human development driven democracy practicing ever better stewardship of the commons.

But first I want to offer some reflections on the Quaker experience at the heart of all the testimonies, the experience of the Inward Light or Truth which is the Spiritual Commons from which all the testimonies spring and to which we are called to be as present and faithful as we can be.

Section One: Truth and The Inward Light

Early Quakers viewed themselves as forming what they called a “Religious Society of Friends of the Truth”. In instituting the system of yearly meetings, they took a central function of these to be, as George Fox put it, “for Friends to see one another and know how the affairs of truth prosper and how Friends do grow in the truth of God”. (1) When asking “How does the Truth prosper amongst you?” they were not asking primarily about people’s beliefs but about their experiences, in particular, their experience of that power of the Inward Light, of the spiritual reality of the transforming power of divine love – their experience of that Presence whose power took away the occasion of all war, the Presence which Fox and others also announced in saying “Christ has come to teach his people himself”. It was a teaching, guiding, empowering, loving Presence that they held was available to everyone, all the time. As Paul Buckley, noted here last year: “. . . in fact, there is only one testimony, faithfully following the word of God spoken within our hearts. This results in many products. When we listen carefully and respond faithfully, it results in simplicity and integrity in our lives, in work for peace and social justice, and in a sense of community with each other and with all creation.” (2) Early

Quakers found the experience of that Reality, that lived Truth, so compelling that rather than compromise their experience of it, they would be “counted as sheep for the slaughter, persecuted and despised, beaten, stoned, wounded, stocked, whipped, imprisoned, haled out of synagogues, cast into dungeons and noisome vaults, where many have died in bonds, shut up from our friends, denied needful sustenance for many days together, with other the like cruelties.” (3) The Loving Presence sustaining those Friends was really powerful stuff.

Early Quakers found this experience of transforming power was completely accessible to everyone regardless of rank, race, gender, or education: there was “that of God in everyone.” As a result, they had a rather extraordinary approach to preaching and spreading the Good News. They did not need to tell people what to believe and how to live. Instead, they had to get people to turn towards the Light, to look inwardly for that Word of God that was already there, waiting to be heard. The key? To invite people to genuinely enter into the Silence and listen, standing in the Light.

One further point about this: To call the light “inward” was not, I think, to suggest that it was subjective, private, or a mere artifact of individual consciousness. While occurring in the realm of meanings rather than material things and so not being an outward physical object, it was no more a personal and subjective “truth” that is the truth of the Pythagorean Theorem – which is also not, itself, an outwards physical object. The Light was something people experienced in common, as a kind of objective reality, something independent of their individual wills -- something that could in fact overcome all their individual desires or “lusts” and thus take away the occasion of all war. The Light was something that they could discern and cultivate their relationship with collectively in meetings for worship. What Howard Brinton later called their “group mysticism” was founded on an experience of the divine as a kind of Spiritual Commons – an ocean of light in which they could swim.

How does THAT Truth, that Kindly but also incredibly powerful Light, prosper amongst us? When I look at my own life, the lives of other Friends, and the prospects more generally of humans and our fellow creatures here on this planet, I have to answer: not so well. It is not prospering so well. If it were prospering really well, our lives, our societies, our international order and the state of the ecosystems on Earth would be dramatically different.

Why? What is obscuring the experience and influence of that Inward Light? I want to suggest to a significant extent, it is problems with our culture and our political economy. Part of the reason we should work as hard as we can on those problems is, I want to suggest, because solving them will help us tap into our taproot – getting right with the world is part of getting closer to God. As we come, progressively, to live and share with others in a peace culture and a democratic political economy, we will know, ever more forcefully and experientially, that powerful Presence of transforming.

Challenge 1: Our Culture of Conflict

Historically, peace has been obscured in our dominant culture by the basic categories we use to think about life. This is changing, significantly. But the ideas and practices that are dominant belong, still, to what I think it is fair to call a “culture of conflict”.

It is a culture in which peace is defined statically and, in the logician's sense, "negatively". Note it is perfectly good English to say that "Nations are warring in the Middle East." But not to say "Nations are peaceing in Scandinavia". In mainstream culture, "peace" is not a verb. "Peace" names a state or condition that is typically defined "negatively" in the sense that it is defined by what it is not – not "war" or in other variations – not violence or some other form of conflict. In that sense we only know what peace is NOT, not what it IS. In that sense, its essence is obscured.

I would suggest that the reason peace is defined that way is because we live in a conflict centered culture. By this I mean that the central categories used to understand human life are conflict centered. The economy is viewed as a competition over scarce resources. The practice of law is viewed as a verbal duel between prosecutor and defense. In bargaining and negotiation, the winner is the person who extracts the most concessions from the other side. In literature, dramatic narratives are viewed as conflicts. In science, evolution is viewed as a struggle of the fittest. Diplomacy is viewed as war carried on by other means. Feeling and reason are viewed as at odds within each of us. And reason itself as a "critical" practice is understood using war metaphors – where its about "defending" our "positions" from "attack" by "marshalling" evidence that provides an elegant "riposte" or really "nails your opponent".

The way conflict categories that frame these practices obscure peace is this: If you think conflict is essential to human life, then without conflict, there is no life. It is a bit like saying Hydrogen is essential to water or H₂O. If you want to take all the hydrogen out of this glass water, then you have to take all the water out. Similarly, if conflict is essential to life – as though life is a mix of it and Other stuff like carbon and oxygen and such, -- a kind of conflict2Other or C2O – then the only way to reduce or eliminate conflict is to reduce or eliminate the life of which it is an essential part. And so if we suppose that peace is, at the very least, some kind of reduction or elimination of conflict, then once you reduce that – and the life it is essential to – there is nothing left over for peace to be. It is what remains when you move from a busy lively, conflictual city to a quiet sleepy "peaceful" little town and then stop by the cemetery – where there is the "peace" in which the dead rest.

And social scientists who view human life through these sorts of conflict categories see it as typified in its most simplistic and essential form with a metaphor like this: There are two islanders but only one coconut – and so they are in a basic conflict system. All economics, law, literature, religion, politics and such are just more complex variation on this one theme: two islanders and only one coconut.

Now I imagine, and hope, that most of you are itching to note that there are all sorts of alternatives to these conflict centered practices. People like Gandhi and more recently the Harvard Negotiation Project and lots of others have been working to develop alternative practices for dealing with differences such as: satyagraha as an alternative to civil war, principled negotiation that uses "win/win" methods, mediation methods for out of court dispute resolution, Truth and Reconciliation methods, collaborative forms of reasoning and group problem solving, non-violent communication, and multi-track forms of diplomacy. (4) The idea of peace making, of peace as a verb, is central to these efforts to develop a culture of peace. It is a verb for activities defined by the cultivating of genuine, voluntary agreements – commitments to share in expressions, project and practices that emerge over time in a collaborative way. (5)

The change from a culture of conflict to one of peace involves intermediate stages – e. g. from “win/lose” to “win/win” metaphors to non-conflictual metaphors where there is no talk of winning at all. Farming metaphors are one example -- cultivating seeds for example was a favorite of Gandhi’s. Another useful metaphor is birth. It can be incredibly painful and dangerous. The physical integrity and even existence of mother and child are at stake. But it makes no sense to view it as a conflict – as though either the mother or baby will win in the fight against the other. Each of them individuate their identities and realize their interests jointly with the other, together. This is a way that all of life can be viewed and is, in the emerging culture of peace – as a process which we all are giving birth to new projects, institutions, communities and ourselves.

Quakers have been developing practices of peace like consensus and communal discernment since their beginning. Methods of running Meetings for Worship for the Conduct of Business aimed to provide ways for us to learn about concerns and govern ourselves as guided by the Inward Light. They provide key models for a variety of forms of governance and human collaboration of all sorts, including research, a point I will return to soon.

But first let me pick up my earlier suggestion, that the Inward Loving Presence is obscured by the currently still dominant culture of conflict. If life consists of variations on two islanders fighting over the one coconut – then what can love be? Perhaps a desire or “love” for things or people that we want for our very own – a trophy wife, for example. Or perhaps love could be some form of self-sacrifice, as when one islander just gives up and gives it over? Not that that would be rational, or in her self-interest. In the culture of conflict, loving self-sacrificers are, literally, real losers.

I do not think, in the culture of conflict, that a very coherent or compelling understanding of that kind of love and Inward Light Margaret Fell and John Woolman experienced can even be articulated.

So cultivating a culture of peace is, I suggest, an essential step towards helping us all get closer to a clearer understanding of AND experience of Love and the Inward Light. Overall, I would say that there has been great progress on developing models and methods for such a culture of peace. The biggest challenge we face now, is, I think, developing the social structures that will institutionalize various, locally appropriate versions of it, across the world. Hence the second challenge -- our political economy. But before taking it up, I want to mention one emerging practice of a peace culture in which Friends are working. It is in the realm of research on economic, ecological and other social problems.

In mainstream academia, the dominant model of research is a conflictual “publish or perish” and it leads to competitions for grants and turf wars over ideas and even, in the context of politically charged issues, war-like “campaigns” in which think tanks vie to control public opinion.

In 2002, a group of Quakers gathered at Pendle Hill for a consultation on economics and ecology, seeking to discern what a Friends testimony on these might be and searching, in particular, for ways to deal with the challenges of both in less conflictual ways. Some gathered, later that summer to form a Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF) to work on these problems. (6) It was initially conceived of as a kind of Quaker Think Tank that might provide an alternative to the Heritage Foundation and Brookings Institute. But the notion emerged quickly that it should be governed in a

distinctive way and adopt a distinctive kind of Friendly research practice. The core vision was of holding “Meetings for Worship for the Conduct of Research”. For 10 years now, in summer research seminars, book writing teams, and “circles of discernment”, Friends have been experimenting with various forms of communal discernment models for working on economic, ecological and other major issues of our time. The idea is to take seriously Fox’s notion that the “Christ who has come to teach his people himself” is a Presence that can be experienced and turned to in seeking guidance in the details not only of daily life but also, specifically, the research projects that generate our understandings of how the world works and how it could be bettered. I invite all of you to consider perhaps taking part in this kind of practice. The research that interests you may be very specific and local – best practices for child rearing or the impact of town zoning laws – or it may be deal with national transportation policy or global energy use. What I would like to suggest is that we may all make better progress on these issues if we experiment with trying to guide our study and research in collaborative and Friendly ways that seek divine guidance. I hope you will take this suggestion seriously and consider trying some experiments with Truth in this vein, e. g. by forming a “circle of discernment”.

Section Three: Our Political Economy

The central institutions of our economy and our political system are still very entrenched in the culture of conflict and reinforce its dominance. In doing so, they also promote poverty, inequality, injustice, violence, and ecological destruction in a host of ways. Struggling with these issues, Friends in QIF have produced an important book on **RIGHT RELATIONSHIP: BUILDING A WHOLE EARTH ECONOMY**, as well as a series of very helpful pamphlets. Aspects of the issues can get complicated and sometimes subtle and technical in dealing, for example, with the money system. But, I think that the heart of the challenge for Quakers is clear. We need to make whatever changes in the structures of our political economy are necessary to enable us to speak to, encourage, and answer that of God in everyone.

The Inward Light answers that of God in the others. Like Kant’s categorical imperative and vision of the “kingdom of ends”, mutuality or reciprocity is of its essence. But it is not abstract and purely formal. Real life is full of Life – changing, evolving, developing, growing, emerging, transforming – seeds becoming oaks, pregnant couples giving birth to families, gatherings of strangers becoming communities, with practices, traditions and identities emerging in a myriad of ways. Real life is not a monologue of abstract Reason announcing its dictates but a dialogue in which meaning emerges. The respectful, listening, loving, transforming power of the Truth, is what makes real and authentic dialogue possible. In real and authentic dialogue we open ourselves to being shown to be flawed, in all sorts of ways. The Inward Light is a Presence that enables us to let go of all that, let go our “lusts” and errors associated with them and become part of something new and more whole and more Truthful. It is a Presence that enables real dialogue. It is what enables us to hear with the heart. And

“It’s a simple thing, to hear with the heart.

But it takes everything. It takes all that you are.

It takes all that your are, and then makes something more.

And then you no longer are . . . who you once were.” (7)

But we humans have a remarkable ability to listen selectively, to exclude some while including others – as children we have all seen grownups talking to each other as though we were not there. It is an equally common experience to be on the other side, to be listening to some and not others – because of their status, race, gender, wealth, professional credentials, and so on. When we practice such exclusion, we limit our experience of that Presence that makes real dialogue possible. Inasmuch as we have excluded the least of these among us, we have excluded the Divine in all Her powerful loving Presence.

A core problem with our economic and political systems is that they institutionalize just such exclusion in a variety of ways. And in excluding others from the dialogues and interchanges – from the wealth, power, practices and creations of meanings of this world -- they exclude us from the relations of authentic dialogue in which we would experience that extraordinary loving Presence.

The QIF writing projects have been developing an increasingly insightful, systematic and helpful critique of our economic and political system and ways to take action to change it. I would like to highlight some key insights and proposals for action.

One point is that our market system and its property rules often allow people to buy things and use them while excluding, from the cost they pay, some of the real costs and concerns of others. In deciding to buy a gallon of gas and burn it, I can exclude from consideration the voices of all those who bear the costs of global warming, for example - - these are kept “external” to the price at the pump.. Friends testimony for Truth would seem to call for truth in pricing – these “externalities” should be taken into account as well as other things that affect prices like direct subsidies, taxes, regulations, and government programs like research funding – and the billions of Pentagon dollars used to provide oil companies with security services.

A second key point is that our property system has a strong bias towards managing common resources like water, fisheries and gene pools through privatization. And, in particular, forms of privatization that exclude many people unjustly from rightful access to the resource and a voice in the rightful use of that resource. This is true not only of common physical resources but other goods we have to share and can manage either as private commodities or shared commons -- like health, education, transportation, knowledge and security.

The unjust and ecologically harmful ways of managing the commons that result from our property system are made worse by our system of corporate management which focuses only on one bottom line, financial profit.

They are also made worse by our monetary system which uses debt – U. S. Government borrowing from the Fed and fractional reserve lending from banks – to create money. The interest on these debts compels us to seek ever more income to pay back more, next year than we borrowed last. So it fuels a growth economy, the drive for ever more GNP, pushed by debt as well as the profit motive to divide up and consume ever more of the commons of the Earth and the ecosystems on which we all depend.

It would be misleading, I think, to frame these problems in terms of a choice between capitalism and socialism – between free markets and government management. The system we have now is already a mix of markets and government management – a “mixed economy”. Or, rather, it is a “mixed political economy” – because property rules, taxes, subsidies, and other forms of political governance are essential elements of

it. Our electoral financing system, our lobbying system, and our mass media frame and profoundly influence our current plutocratic, oligarchic, growth centered political economy that promotes the consumption of things. The alternative we need will also be a “mixed” political economy but democratic, human development centered and promoting the stewardship of the commons – and its chief product will be good lives -- instead of good things.

QIF publications like “It’s the Economy Friend” and “Beyond the Growth Dilemma”, describe a variety of steps towards that transformation. (See www.quakerinstitute.org) They include methods for insuring truth in pricing methods to manage commons and “B” or Benefit Corporations that are managed for triple bottom lines, and the worker cooperatives of Mondragon, the consumer coops and credit unions in the United States. Campaign finance reform and people’s lobbying efforts are other keys. So too are the social movements and legislative efforts that led to the remarkable reduction and virtual elimination of poverty in Norway and Kerala. Other key proposals include local currencies to stimulate decentralized markets and a national currency based on money creation by fiat instead of by debt to stop the drive towards growth.

In June last year, at “Rio+20” in Brazil, I encountered a variety of other very promising initiatives – as well as insight into one further profound structural problem that is of special concern to Friends – the national security state.

Twenty years earlier, the leaders of the nations of the world had gathered in Rio de Janeiro to initiate a process to move the countries of the world towards what they started then calling “sustainable development” framed by core principles that included a kind of social contract between the “First” and “Third” world: The poorer and developing countries of the world would give up their right to pollute as much in the future as developed countries have in the past and present -- in exchange for real and substantial aid in the technology and investment needed to develop in more sustainable ways. The “Rio+20” summit last June should have been a time to celebrate the completion of the 20 years of negotiations to work out the details of that agreement and the financial commitments for its implementation to, for example, reverse global warming. But the heads of state of the developed world, including Barack Obama, did not even show up. Why? To avoid the embarrassment of having no real commitments to announce.

But in downtown Rio, at the “People’s Summit” over 20,000 folks from all around the world showed up. And amongst them, the original “Rio” vision was thriving in a new world governed by progressive cities, community groups, indigenous peoples, business/NGO alliances, women, and youth taking global governance into their own hands.

What was going on, I wondered. Why were these folks making such great progress and the nations of the world were not? My conclusion was this:

National security states have a territory they defend with military. They are pressed inevitably to look at the world in the “realpolitik” of national interests. Every resource inevitably appears as a possession or a possible asset/conquest. Even for a former community organizer like Barack Obama, the institutional constraints for someone in the driver’s seat create this dashboard view. It is a vision in which all of nature -- rivers, oceans, the sky itself – appear as commodities to be possessed, not shared commons.

But local and regional governments see the world differently. Limited in power,

depending on neighbors and others, they see a world full of commons. So they seek collaboration of the kind proliferating worldwide and so evident in Rio outside the official negotiations.

For example, I talked with Mirhan Göğüs from the The Carbon Disclosure Project, an NGO already working very successfully with 75 cities and hundreds of companies doing an essential job of global governance: providing a “transformative global system for companies and cities to measure, disclose, manage and share environmental information.” (www.cdproject.net)

I heard city officials and multilateral development banks commit \$175 billion to improve sustainable urban infrastructure in developing countries. (www.adb.org)

And I met people working to secure Rights to To Nature around the world – including in nations that proved to be wonderful exceptions to my analysis of the National Security State – because they were too “weak” to afford to not be neighborly, and were motivated to adopt the commons view of interdependence. Bolivia and Ecuador announced major initiatives for rights to nature and “buen vivir”. Such “living well” means not having more, but making sure that everyone has enough -- and commons are cared for. Ecuador is committing 3.6 billion dollars to guarantee 800 million barrels of oil under its Yasuni Park will never soil the above ground biosphere.

Wandering the People’s Summit, I encountered a joyous carnival for the world Paul Hawken calls “the Blessed Unrest”. (www.wiser.org) It is a world whose new rules are found in the consensus methods of indigenous communities and protocols of the Internet and the nonviolence of the Arab Spring. It is a thriving world full of youth. It is an emerging world governance system that is taking up the tasks abandoned by national security states.

But we must transform our National Security State along with others into neighborly nations living in interdependence, sharing the commons – not only to end the threat of war but to see an earth restored. (8)

What then, are we called as Friends to do to promote these transformations and bear witness to a future governed in right relationships and guided by the Inward Light? There is an incredible variety of things already going on – I just want to call 2 to your attention.

The first might be called “meeting God halfway”. In the US we consume at a level that would require 4 Earths if everyone in the world shared our standard of living. As a matter of equity we need to reduce our impact. Our ecological “footprint” is, in fact, a “bulldozer print”. And we need to share with those living on as little as 1 or 2 dollars a day. Jesus might tell us to take all that we have and give it away. My proposal provides a more modest start. What if we each do two things. First, reduce our consumption by 10% a year – for five years in a row. Second, take the money thus saved and use it to invest in political action for change, socially responsible investments, or direct aid to those in real need. In five years we would reduce consumption by 50% and perhaps be meeting God “halfway”.

This core idea would need to be adapted of course to Friends’ circumstances in a wide variety of ways. Needs differ: a young couple starting a family would be in a very different situation from a couple in their 50’s with kids moving out of the house. Resources differ as well: perhaps renting those now empty rooms might provide income that would change the percentage consumed by increasing the pie being shared in

political action, responsible investment and direct aid to others. (9) I invite Friends to consider how and how far you might be led to explore this option – and to discover how far it might liberate you to experience God more fully. You might find, for example, that

“Once I had a fancy house and oh did I feel fine. I thought I had the kind of wealth that made my face to shine. But then I learned to love the Lord and my neighbor as myself and now I’m smilin’ all the time.

Smilin’ all the time – I love You – smilin’ all the time. Then I learned to love the Lord and my neighbor as myself and now I’m smilin’ all the time.”

If enough Friends take this step, it could lead to the mobilization of a rather significant amount of resources. If their action is emulated by others, it could be even more dramatic. Suppose, for example, that a million members of Moveon.org tried it. Play with the math and think about it.

The mention of Moveon brings me to the second possibility I want to mention. Friends’ testimonies would have more impact if there were more Friends – or “Friend-like” people. Should we be recruiting more?

Preaching at people and telling them to adopt our beliefs is largely anathema to Friends. With good reason, our faith is not defined by beliefs in a creed, it is defined by experiences of the Presence of that transforming Inward Light. But it would be very much in the spirit of Friends and the practices of early Quakers like Fox and Fell and the Valiant 60 to seek out people to join us through experiences.

One way is by witnessing experientially with our lives in public, easily identified ways. During the Vietnam era this is how many young people were drawn to Friends. We are in a similar time now with social movements in which young people are trying to not only speak Truth to power but exercise power through direct action – Occupying not only Wall Street but the route for the Keystone XL, the mountain tops of West Virginia and a host of other sites. At a talk at COA last summer, Bill McKibben pointed out that in such work, older people, especially the retired, have some key advantages over kids right out of school: the security that medicare and SSI provide, time and freedom of movement, experience, personal networks, long run concern about their beloved grandchildren’s futures and the power of pension funds. I invite Friends to consider the possibility that there might be many elders amongst us who might feel called to join across generations in a powerful witness that may risk imprisonment or worse – a witness that might lead many young people to try their own experiments with Truth in Quaker contexts.

And that leads to a second way of recruiting experientially rather than by preaching. It’s the way Fox and his generation used. Rex Ambler is very helpful in describing it. It consists in urging people to turn inwards, towards the Light and then let It do the persuading. It is a matter of looking for and finding that of God in them. It is a matter not of preaching but of listening – listening new communities of Quakers into being.

Of course as we speak with our lives and listen -- answering to that of the divine in the others -- they may find that they are not led to become better by being Quakers who worship in Silence. They may be led to be better Baptists who worship in Song or better Catholics practicing Liberation Theology in their “comunidades de base” or better Pagans celebrating the Earth Goddess or better Muslims who experience the Truth of that Inward Light directly and experientially in prayer and fasting for Ramadan and

giving the Zakat. Even more, as we seek to speak with our lives and listen with that of God in us we may be led to be something or someone different ourselves. We are called to be open to the most radical of possibilities when we enter into the authentic dialogue with others.

And those others include even the very plants and animals and ecological communities of this Earth. The languages they speak are not of a human making – but they are languages nonetheless, systems of meaning that provide the contexts for their lives as organisms and communities – and the context for our lives as members of this great commonwealth of life. They communicate and send messages in a rich variety of ways. Some of these indigenous peoples have proved adept learning such as the signals birds and flowers send. Others such as the genetic code and the language of messenger RNA and proteins are only more recently being cracked by scientists.

The life that surrounds us and sustains us deserves our reverence and respect. Living organisms and communities all deserve to be held in the Light as systems of meaning that provide the context for our organic bodies and communities.

For we are all part of one great commons that is not a thing to be parceled out, possessed and exploited but a community of which we are each members, each a piece of a larger whole . . . in which there is a Presence that has come to teach us how to live in right relationship with each other in increasing integrity, resiliency and beauty.

Postlude: Breath on the Water

I would like to share a song, a round, that tries to express part of the vision of the commons I have tried to articulate today. It's theme is "breath on the water" – think here of the process of creation in Genesis in which there was "Breath on the waters". But think also of Jesus saying we should cast our bread on the waters and it will come back to us. With our breath, this literally happens. The oxygen and water coursing in our blood leaves through our lungs, floats through the air, is absorbed in and out by a plant and, sometime later, is breathed in by another creature who incorporates it into her flesh, and then out, and then in again by another, till perhaps after a time, coming to nourish us again. The song has three parts:

"An Air for Buddhists and Other Animals" (10)

Take this air and pass it on,
reach down breath it all the way in.

Pass it on and share and share again.

It's all breath on the water;

it's all breath on the water.

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

~Animal calls and plant sounds.

~Animal calls and plant sounds.

~Animal calls and plant sounds.

~Animal calls and plant sounds.

~Animal calls and plant sounds.

Footnotes:

1. See page 60 in Rex Ambler's, **TRUTH OF THE HEART: AN ANTHOLOGY OF GEORGE FOX**, Quaker House Books, 2001
2. See **"The Origin of the SPICES"**, Delivered at South Central Yearly Meeting 2012 by Paul Buckley
3. **From "A DECLARATION FROM THE HARMLESS AND INNOCENT PEOPLE OF GOD, CALLED QUAKERS, AGAINST ALL SEDITION, PLOTTERS, AND FIGHTERS IN THE WORLD: FOR REMOVING THE GROUND OF JEALOUSY AND SUSPICION FROM MAGISTRATES AND PEOPLE CONCERNING WARS AND FIGHTINGS."** By George Fox and others, Presented to the King upon the 21st day of the 11th Month, 1660
4. Other very helpful materials on the culture of peace can be found in include **Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In** by Bruce M. Patton, William L. Ury, Roger Fisher; **Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures** by John Paul Lederach; **Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformations of Deadly Conflict** by Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse; and **Thich Nhat Hanh: Essential Writings** by [Thich Nhat Hanh](#).
5. For a brief elaboration of this analysis of a peace culture and the alternative culture of peace, see my Pendle Hill Pamphlet, "Bearing Witness: Quaker Process and a Culture of Peace", 1985. For a detailed and systematic development of these ideas see my Paulist Press book, **THE WAYS OF PEACE: A PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE AS ACTION**, 1986. For an mp3 version of this as well as further reflections on the Rio+20 meeting see www.breathonthewater.com
6. For more about the Quaker Institute for the Future as well as access to the pamphlets and other writings, see: www.quakerinstitute.org
7. A number of my songs such as the one this verse is from ("To Hear With The Heart") are available at www.coa.edu/gcox.
8. For some further reflections on the Rio+20 events – including protests and music that was part of them, see: www.breathonthewater.com
9. For a more developed account of this proposal see my "Meeting God Halfway: A Quaker Witness on Economic Justice and Ecological Concern", first published in **FRIENDS JOURNAL**, 2005 but also available on the QIF website at www.quakerinstitute.org
10. For an mp3 version of this as well as further reflections on the Rio+20 meeting see www.breathonthewater.com

Appendix: Possible Queries:

1. How might I be drawn to experiment with practices of peace as an activity –

including “Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Research”?

2. In what ways do we experience shifts to an emerging culture of peace or to a democratic political economy as easing our direct experience of that of God in ourselves and others? What aspects of the culture of conflict or the plutocratic, growth driven political economy might obscure that experience?

3. To what extent might we find ourselves called to “meet God halfway” and how in our particular circumstances might this notion be applied?

4. In what ways might we feel drawn to encourage or support non-Quakers in considering sharing the practices and experiences of Friends?