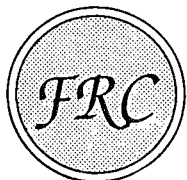


# PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY RELATIONS CONCERNS GROUP  
OF PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING



*For Overseers, Member of Ministry and Counsel,  
and others involved in pastoral care and counseling*

Vol. V, No. 4

June 1998

## Supporting Stands of Conscience

by Priscilla Adams and Steve Gulick

Stands of conscience are a visible sign of our living faith as Friends. As the old joke tells it, when meeting for worship was just beginning, a visitor whispered to the Friend sitting near, "When does the service begin?" The Friend responded, "When worship is over, then the service begins." Our very practice of Quaker worship opens us to movements of the Spirit that lead us into service in the world.

It is common for Friends to take relatively small, everyday stands of conscience: choosing an environmentally friendly action, reaching out to help someone in need, creating a welcoming environment for children, or participating in a

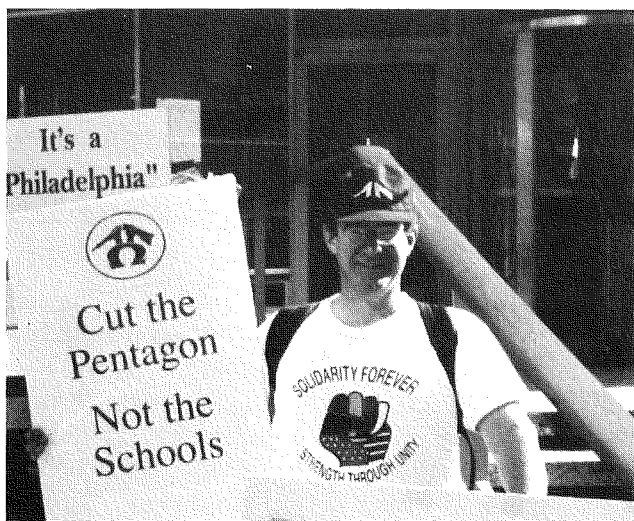
service project. By appreciating and nurturing such everyday acts, our meetings can deepen the basis of our faith in the Spirit and its leadings.

Sometimes these leadings bring Friends into conflict with laws and social customs. Feeling led through worship to belief in the equality of all in the eyes of God, early Friends refused to practice "hat honor" or to use the plural "you" in addressing individuals of higher social rank. This refusal to acknowledge inferior and superior status led to the persecution and imprisonment of Friends.

In response to this persecution, the essential structures of meetings were set up to help address the consequences of taking stands of conscience. Throughout Friends' history, monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, committees of Overseers or Ministry and Counsel, and funds for sufferings have addressed the physical, material, emotional, communal, and spiritual needs of Friends who suffer for conscience sake.

How should contemporary meetings respond when a member is called to take a stand of conscience that carries a risk of social, legal or economic consequences?

- young men who refuse to register with Selective Service risking jail sentences, fines, loss of student loans, and exclusion from government training and employment;
- people who refuse to pay war taxes risking



*Steve Gulick*

seizure of money and property, fines, and possible (but rare) jail sentences;

- Friends who participate in protest sit-ins and other such acts of civil disobedience risking possible jail and fines;
- those who leave jobs or choose not to take them for reasons of conscience risking unemployment or even loss of career;
- Friends who try to live in certain places or to send their children to certain schools in order to address social and institutional racism risking personal sacrifice and struggle;
- those who seek to live with minimal impact on the environment risking difficulties in this hyper-consumer society.

When a Friend is taking a stand of conscience, the most important support comes from the Spirit. Without that, no stand of conscience is long tenable. But even with divine support, taking a stand of conscience can be difficult. The support of the meeting can make an important difference to a Friend's ability to stay true to a leading and ease the difficulties and dilemmas along the way.

Different meetings will have different ways of providing care for their members. Often committees of Overseers or Ministry and Counsel are asked to take the lead on behalf of the meeting in responding to these Friends.

Perhaps the most important specific action a meeting can take is to set up a clearness process to help the individual discern the clarity of the leading, the path of the witness, and ways for others to be of assistance. A clearness committee provides perspectives which can focus and deepen the witness, indeed which can help discern if it is rightly ordered – a true calling. Often the course of the witness is altered by deeply searching, with the support of loving Friends, for the guidance of the Spirit.

When clearness is found, the clearness committee can assist the individual to identify what support is wanted or needed. In addition, the gathering for clearness can provide a means of thinking through what support can realistically be offered by the meeting.

Once the clearness committee has come to

recognize that the individual is responding to a genuine call, they report back to the meeting for business both their findings and their recommendations about actions the meeting might take. Sometimes, the meeting quickly comes to unity on the recommendation of the committee.

At other times deep questions are raised. There may be Friends who disagree with the proposed action and feel the meeting should not support it. There may be concerns about the level of energy the meeting can or should invest in supporting the stand of conscience. There may be fears about the motives, skill, or even the personality of the person seeking the meeting's support. Some Friends may recognize the clarity of the individual's call, but not be called themselves to provide active support. Lovingly and prayerfully considering these concerns can bring the meeting to a deeper sense of oneness in the Spirit. In fact, coming to unity too quickly may deprive the meeting and the individual of that deep sense of being together under the Spirit's care.

In this wonderful Quaker process, the individual called to the stand of conscience receives the gift of having Friends come together in her or his behalf. The members of the clearness committee also receive the gift of trust and openness shown by the person seeking clearness. It is a privilege to be involved in important decisions of another's life and to be present to the movement of the Spirit in the life of one of our members.

The meeting as a whole also receives a gift. Discernment of the truth of a leading and the ways in which the meeting and its members might be supportive leads us all to seek the guidance of the Spirit. Following a discernment process, the stand

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## To Our Readers

Do you find *Pastoral Care Newsletter* useful?

The new committee structure of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting provides that projects will continue only to the extent that Friends who share the concern come together to keep it vital. That is where you come in. Our committee needs two or three additional members. If you share a concern for maintaining *PCN* we need to hear from you.

Much of the work of the committee is done through mail, e-mail, and telephone conference. Committee members help to identify topics for articles and Friends who can write wisely and well, work to promote the newsletter and extend circulation, and support and supervise the editor.

Please ponder prayerfully whether the Spirit is calling you to help *PCN* continue to be a resource to meetings. For more information contact Sue Heath, clerk of the committee, at (609)234-4159 or e-mail [susandheat@aol.com](mailto:susandheat@aol.com).



## Pendle Hill

*Strengthening Meetings*

### Inquirers' Weekends

July 10-12 & November 20-22

### Quaker Faith as a Guide to Family Living Fun and Learning for Parents and Children

Harriet Heath & Lynn Sinclair · July 12-17

### Your Money or Your Life

Penny Yunuba & Dick Bogartz · July 17-19

### Young Adult Friends Gathering

Trayce Peterson & others · September 5-7

### Religious Education: Ideas that Work

co-sponsored with Friends General Conference · September 11-13

### Mountaintops and Valleys of the Spiritual Life

Dan Snyder & Demaris Wehr · October 23-25

For more information on these and other programs contact Bobbi Kelly, ext. 137 at (610) 566-4507 or (800) 742-3150  
Box FR · 338 Plush Mill Road · Wallingford, PA 19086

## Couple Enrichment Weekend

October 23-25, 1998 at Camp Onas

Overseers can serve couples in their meeting by inviting them to participate in the weekend at Camp Onas. Some meetings are able to offer scholarship aid or child care to help couples take advantage of this resource.

The weekend, will be led by Gretta and Jacob Stone of Doylestown Meeting. The tentative cost for the weekend is \$150 per couple for room, board, and program. For information call Gretta and Jacob at (215)345-0575.

## Tri Quarter Conference September 18-20, 1998


The theme of this year's tri-quarter conference for Burlington, Haddonfield, and Salem Quarters in New Jersey is *The Meeting as Community*. Family Relations Concerns Group will present workshops for Overseers on pastoral care issues.

For information contact: Tri-Quarter Committee, P.O. Box 55, Woodstown, NJ 08098.

## FRIENDS AND THE VIETNAM WAR

Sponsored by Pendle Hill  
July 16-20

*A Gathering for Reflection, Reappraisal & Looking Ahead*

Contact Chel Avery at (610) 566-4507 x 140  
e-mail: [chelavery@aol.com](mailto:chelavery@aol.com)  [www.quaker.org/pendle-hill](http://www.quaker.org/pendle-hill)

## Friends Counseling Service

Professionally-trained counselors, who are active Friends and whose spiritual lives are integral to their approach to counseling, provide confidential services to individuals, couples, and families. Service is not denied because of a person's lack of means. A complete list of counselors can be found in the September 1997 issue of *PCN*. For referral, contact *Deborah Cooper, Counseling Service Consultant, at (215)988-0140.*

In order to receive your September issue on time  
renew your subscription to *PCN* now

## Winter Park Meeting Supports a Stand of Conscience

Three years ago, Winter Park Meeting in Florida welcomed a new attender with a strong concern for human rights abuses. Rita Lucey's interest in Quakerism grew simultaneously with her commitment to closing the School of the Americas, Ft. Benning, Georgia.

Demonstrating against abuses perpetrated by Latin American military graduates of the school, Rita twice trespassed onto the military property. She was one of 25 "repeat offenders" sentenced to six months in prison and \$3,000 fines. On March 23, 1998, she reported to federal prison camp to begin her sentence.

As her concern grew, she kept the meeting informed of her activities on this concern. At the same time, Rita came into membership in the meeting. The spiritual leadings which had transformed her life began to work their way through the rest of us, like yeast in dough.

We felt a strong desire to stand with Rita on the eve of her imprisonment, which led to a meeting for worship followed by a candlelight vigil. We sang to live guitar music and heard Rita talk. As suggested by Rita we participated in a responsive reading calling on the strength of such heroes as Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary Dyer and our meeting's own World War II conscientious objector. About 100 people came, many from other groups Rita has touched. Orlando Meeting joined us, as did Rita's husband of 46 years, their children and grandchildren. The evening ended with tears and hugs.

The meeting prepared a taped interview with Rita and an exhibit to show Southeastern Yearly Meeting after her incarceration. SEYM was moved to establish a meeting for sufferings and a fund to receive donations for Rita's books, fine, and other needs.

Winter Park Meeting has recorded three ministers to visit her, to report on her needs and to maintain contact with her husband. One writes periodic reports to all concerned with Rita's condition. The rest of us are not permitted to visit her, but we write individually. After meeting for worship, we contribute to a weekly group letter.

We send books and journal subscriptions. We tell her story to others. We hold her in the Light. Rita has stirred us deeply and drawn us together. We are grateful for her presence in our midst.

*For more information on Rita Lucey's stand of conscience, contact Winter Park Monthly Meeting, PO Box 2442, Winter Park, FL 32790 or call Martha Morris, Clerk of Winter Park Meeting, at (407)843-2557.*

### Resources on Clearness and Support

Avery, Chel. *Peace & Taxes – God & Country: A Guide for Seeking Clearness on War Tax Concerns*, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 1990.

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting.  
"Responding to Calls to Ministry," Philadelphia, 1995.

Corbett, Jim. "Leadings," SEYM, 1995.

Craudereuff, Elaine. *War Taxes: Experiences of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers through the American Revolution*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #286.

Cronk, Sandra. *Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of Faithful Church Community*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #297, 1991.

Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns.  
*Handbook on Military Taxes and Conscience*, 1988.

Hoffman, Jan. "Clearness Committees and Their Use in Personal Discernment," twelfth month press, 1996.

Loring, Patricia. *Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committees*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #305, 1992.

Olmstead, Sterling. *Motions of Love: Woolman as Mystic and Activist*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #312, 1993.

Paine, Ruth Hyde. "How Do I Know It's a Leading?" SEYM, 1992.

Punshon, John. *Testimony and Tradition: Some Aspects of Quaker Spirituality*, Quaker Home Service, 1990 (reprint 1992).

War Resisters League. *War Tax Resistance: A Guide to Withholding Your Support from the Military*, 1992.

Wilson, Lloyd Lee. *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, Pendle Hill, 1996 (reprint).

of conscience and the support of the meeting are more deeply shared and, thus, Friends are more ready to respond to the demands that evolve during the stand of conscience.

Of course, not all situations neatly fit this process. Sometimes a Friend does not approach the meeting for clearness at the beginning of a witness, but may seek support when problems arise. In other cases a person may come into membership when they are already actively carrying out a stand of conscience. In these instances, the meeting has to come to unity on what is its proper role and how fully it is willing or able to become involved in supporting this stand.

Once the meeting is under the weight of supporting a witness, it needs to discern what kinds of support are most appropriate. These can vary quite a lot from case to case. The list below is suggestive of types of support the meeting can consider:

*Form a support or oversight group.* This group can meet with the person as needed to assist with discerning, planning, and implementing. The support committee can encourage the person in maintaining the regular spiritual disciplines that sustain the witness. It is helpful for the meeting when an individual or group of Friends coordinate the meeting's response.

*Write a minute of support for the individual's stand of conscience.* This is a clear statement that the meeting has considered the concern and is united in recognizing that the Friend is following a leading of the Spirit. The purpose of the meeting's minute is to acknowledge publicly that the individual is taking an action which springs from spiritual leadings and which is in line with Friends beliefs. It is not a statement saying that all Friends feel led to the same action. The minute can be sent on to the quarterly meeting and yearly meeting for endorsement.

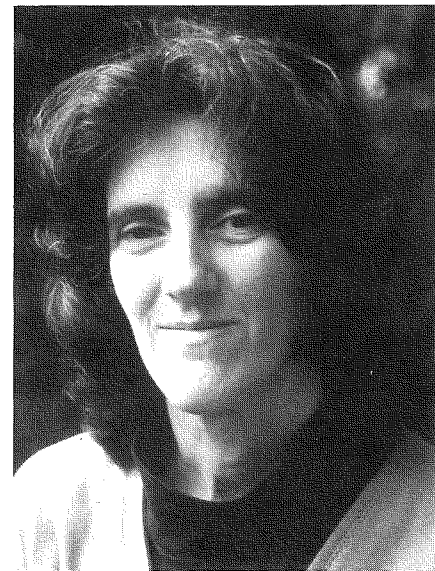
*Help the Friend identify and contact other Friends about the concern.* This can range from helping to find others interested in the concern, to writing to other meetings, perhaps asking for their own minutes of support, or to writing to editors of Friends publications. Priscilla has found that

receiving minutes from numerous meetings has been tremendously supportive in her witness against payment of taxes for war. Most importantly it has provided spiritual support – knowing that other Friends feel that her actions are holding up fundamental issues of conscience for Friends.

*Help with fundraising.* Some stands of conscience may lead to little or no financial expense. Others may have expenses for getting the word out, for legal counsel, or to help cover loss of property or loss of employment. Overseers or the support committee can help identify where funds might be available and how to go about raising them.

*Help with reaching out to other denominations and the broader community.* The concern can be brought to a church council meeting, to specific ministers, to congregations which might be interested, and to community groups. The meeting can provide ideas or help with making the contacts.

*Support Friends if they face antagonism or attacks for their stand or if their stand leads to personal difficulties.* This is a crucial time for the meeting to stand by them by listening, helping discern appropriate responses, being a presence if needed, and helping to respond to the feedback.



*Priscilla Adams*

For example, Friends joined with Steve at IRS for worship when he faced seizure of property to satisfy his tax debt. Friends gathered in worship for Priscilla while others accompanied her into a hearing in tax court.

*Become a clearing house for support or outreach.* If a person begins to be overwhelmed by the demands of the stand and by offers of support, others can offer to receive some of the calls or to do some of the reaching out.

*Provide support for the needs of the family.* This could come in the form of helping with childcare, meals, transportation, visiting with family members troubled by the action or responses to it, or other possibilities. It can also include support for the spouse, especially one who is not involved in or perhaps not even in harmony with the witness. Steve found that his spouse felt very alone in a way that he did not: he had the comradeship of other resisters while she did not have the support of other spouses. For a time there was an effort in the monthly meeting to have a support group for resisters and their non-resisting spouses. Although this did not last very long, it gave his spouse others to talk to and a sense of not being alone.

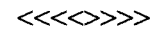
*Support the children.* If there is a lot of media attention, strong reactions from others, or if there are particularly busy times with the witness, the children may need support. This could include letting the children know that other people feel the witness is important, helping them think about their responses to the reactions of others, or providing additional loving adults to do things with them during times when their parents need to focus on the witness.

*Find people with specialized skills.* The witness may come to a point when lawyers, doctors, or people who work with the media are needed. There may be members of the meeting community who can fill these roles, the meeting may help discover others who would provide their services *pro bono*, and/or funds may be required to hire someone with the needed skills.

The meeting should establish its own expectations for the means and frequency of reporting to the meeting as a whole. There also

should be a process, agreed upon in advance, for how to discern the meeting's response to changing needs for support.

Because the support of one individual living out a stand of conscience can take a great deal of time and spiritual, emotional, and other energy, it is important to keep it in balance with the other responsibilities of the meeting. Indeed, there may be more than one member taking stands of conscience on the same or varied concerns. Care for such stands of conscience is only one aspect of the pastoral care of our members that we Friends must address as we try faithfully to live in the world but not of it.



*Priscilla Adams is a member of Haddonfield, NJ, Meeting and has been supported by her meeting and many other Friends in a stand against payment of war taxes. She is the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting regional Peace & Social Concerns staff person for Haddonfield Quarter and has been a war tax resister for twenty-four years.*

*Steve Gulick has served on Overseers and is now clerk of Peace and Social Concerns of Central Philadelphia Meeting. He served on PYM's War Tax Concerns Support Committee for 12 years and was a war tax resister for twenty-five years.*

### Questions for Reflection

1. Are there noticeable ways, great or small, in which worship has led to action in our meeting?
2. How does the meeting encourage small, everyday acts of witness?
3. How does our meeting communicate to its members that it is available to provide clearness and support for stands of conscience?
4. Are we prepared to provide a loving and Spirit-based clearness process for those seeking support? If not, how can we prepare ourselves and our meeting?
5. In what ways can we help the meeting when it is clear that a member is led to a witness that others in the meeting disagree with?
6. How can we balance the meeting's support for a stand of conscience with other demands on the meeting's care?