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Christina Amalia Repoley Date

Prophetic Service: Roots of and New Directions for a Quaker Religious Practice

By

Christina Amalia Repoley

Master of Divinity

Candler School of Theology

_____

Dr. Luther E. Smith, Jr.

Committee Chair

_____

Dr. Steven J. Kraftchick

Director of General and Advanced Studies

_____

Dr. Ellen Ott Marshall

Committee Member

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Christina Amalia Repoley

BA, Guilford College, 2002

Thesis Committee Chair: Dr. Luther E. Smith, Jr.

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Abstract

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By Christina Amalia Repoley

Quaker Rufus Jones once said that the most important and distinctive calling of the Religious Society of Friends is our prophetic service. For many years Quakers engaged in direct service efforts which were explicitly Quaker in composition and self-understanding, particularly the work camps of the American Friends Service Committee. For generations, Quakers found these experiences of direct service to play a formative and transformative role in their lives. In the 1960s and 1970s, this work was nearly completely halted. This paper claims that the projects of direct service were not merely activities but rather functioned as formative religious practices. This paper traces the development of Quaker Voluntary Service as a response to these issues and seeks to ground the work of this fledgling organization by exploring the role of prophetic service in the Quaker tradition. It explores the theological diversity among Friends and how working together across the branches of the schismatic Quaker family tree could help us to better understand what it means to be prophetic. It then briefly explores the history of the work camp programs of the American Friends Service Committee and offers a few explanations for why they ended, which point to important lessons for our efforts today. It then explores in more depth what is meant by the term "prophetic service." Prophetic service, as opposed to secular service, embodies hopefulness and imagination, and is grounded in a religious experience which is expressed communally. Prophetic service means being fully present with and open to one another. We best understand prophetic service as a vital religious practice which forms and transforms people into Quaker identity and into lives committed to peace and justice. Quaker Voluntary Service proposes to reclaim this foundational religious practice while reshaping it to meet the needs and longings of the present generations of Quakers, and looks to the future vitality of our faith.

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I. Introduction

Quaker mystic, educator, and activist Rufus Jones once said that service, "if it is to be genuinely Quaker service, that is, intelligent, spiritual service, must be a method that is consistent with the way and spirit of love…Its way is deeply sacrificial and costly. It gives and shares, not merely goods and money, but life itself…One of the most important missions of a Society like ours is its prophetic service."[1] For our relatively small numbers (estimated to be around 340,000 worldwide),[2] Quakers have had a disproportionate effect on and involvement in social issues. From the abolition of slavery to women's suffrage, from prison reform to peacemaking and nonviolence, Quakers have been at the forefront of these movements, often well ahead of the rest of society. For many years, beginning especially with the relief work during World Wars I and II which specifically gave conscientious objectors a way to do alternative service, young Quakers engaged in many direct service efforts which were explicitly Quaker in composition and self-understanding, most notably the domestic and international work camps organized by the American Friends Service Committee.[3]

For generations, Quakers found these experiences of direct service to play a formative and transformative role in their lives. For many Quakers of a certain generation if asked to speak of their most important life experience, they will tell you about an American Friends Service Committee or Philadelphia Yearly Meeting work camp. If

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[1] Rufus M. Jones, "The Spiritual Message of the Religious Society of Friends," World Conference Report of Commission I, 1937, 7-16.

[2] Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 112.

[3] The American Friends Service Committee may also be referred to as AFSC for the rest of this paper.

asked why they became a Quaker or why they decided to remain a Quaker, they will tell you about an AFSC work camp. If asked why they committed their lives to work for peace and justice, they will tell you about an experience of Quaker service. In the 1960s and 1970s, the work camp programs and other forms of direct service were nearly completely halted, for various reasons, including the desire to address root causes of issues rather than providing direct aid, critical issues such as paternalism, and a move away from focus on Quaker youth on the part of AFSC. Though containing problematic elements, I believe that these projects of direct service, especially when they were truly embodiments of *prophetic service* as understood by Rufus Jones, played a crucial formative function in our community. The vitality of our faith community has suffered because of their loss.

A healthy spiritual life requires that communities of faith engage in a difficult, creative balance that deeply honors roots and tradition while remaining open to new understandings. Rootedness is essential for the production of vibrant fruits, and openness is necessary to discern God's leadings in a particular moment in time. Indeed, tradition can guide without binding or constraining, and new ideas can enter the consciousness without destroying enduring values. In the Quaker tradition, there is a long history of engaging in direct service. Not all of that history is something we are proud of today, yet there was much about those experiences that was prophetic and transformative. I believe in understanding the actions of those in the past through both a hermeneutics of generosity and of suspicion. That is, while interrogating their actions I also accept that they were making decisions with a different set of information than I have now and that mostly people did the best they could. And yet we can learn from the many years of

growth and change that allow us our contemporary vantage point and thus hopefully do even better than they did. In recent generations opportunities for direct prophetic service in a Quaker context have not been widely available to Quaker youth. It is my contention that we are at a point in time when we have the wisdom and the resources to take a fresh look at this tradition, examine the ways it worked and did not work, and understand how it can be reclaimed as a faithful, life-giving practice which has the potential to revitalize our entire faith community.

For a faith tradition that is so incredibly diverse (ranging from Evangelical Christians Quakers to agnostics or atheists to Buddhist Quakers) and which does not practice any outward sacraments, it is my contention that direct service of the kind engaged in through the work camp programs functioned as an important religious practice. Not only did these service opportunities provide important sources of aid and resources to suffering people, they also played a crucial function for Quakers in terms of unifying the participants, sometimes across lines of great differences, and especially in facilitating transformative spiritual experiences which formed and shaped them for the rest of their lives. Indeed, I would claim that direct service has in fact played a sacramental function in the Quaker tradition and we have suffered because of the loss of this corporate experience.

Because of my convictions about the necessity for opportunities of direct prophetic service, I have spearheaded an effort to create a new organization, Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS). Quaker Voluntary Service is being born out of concern over many of the issues just raised, and the work of QVS is the concrete inspiration for this research. The paper will begin by tracing the development of Quaker Voluntary Service,

still very much a fledgling organization. The rest of the paper seeks to ground the work of Quaker Voluntary Service by exploring the role of prophetic service in the Quaker tradition. To do this, I will explore the theological diversity among Friends and how working together across the branches of the schismatic Quaker family tree could help us to better understand what it means to be prophetic. I will examine the impacts of secularism and other forces of modernity on Quakerism and how these developments have impacted our service efforts. I will then briefly explore the history of the work camp programs of the American Friends Service Committee and offer a few explanations for why they ended, which point to important lessons for our efforts today.

I will then explore in more depth what is meant by the term "prophetic service." Prophetic service, as opposed to secular service, embodies hopefulness and imagination, and is grounded in a religious experience which is expressed communally. Prophetic service means being fully present with and open to one another. I will then argue that we best understand prophetic service as a vital religious practice which forms and transforms people into Quaker identity and into lives committed to peace and justice. Ultimately I will argue for the work of Quaker Voluntary Service, which proposes to reclaim this foundational religious practice while reshaping it to meet the needs and longings of the present generations of Quakers and looks to the future vitality of our faith.

II. Quaker Voluntary Service: Tracing a Leading

Several years ago I began to seriously consider the question of why so many Friends in my age group who grew up in an unprogrammed Quaker meeting were no longer active with Friends. Certainly the absence of young adults is a problem for many churches and faith communities, but it seemed a bigger issue for us. At the time, I was living in community with some Mennonites my age, and the situation was very different for them. Though they had many questions and concerns about their faith, they nevertheless remained committed to their faith community, were active in their local congregation, and were part of a large network of other young Mennonites who were at a similar point in their lives. Though there are many complicated historical and theological reasons that the sense of self identity for Mennonites and Quakers is different, I found that one reason kept coming up. For them, there were many opportunities to engage in meaningful work as young Mennonites, work that was firmly rooted in and explicitly part of the overall Mennonite faith and church structure. Examples they gave included the fact that Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) as well as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), both well-established organizations, facilitated these kinds of experiences. Many of them and many in their families and friendship circles had done a year of service with MVS, or had spent time overseas with MCC. These experiences were well known and accessible, there was funding to support the volunteers, and, most importantly, the experiences were transformative. They served to form and confirm their identities as Mennonites, their commitment to the church, as well as their convictions about peace and

social justice and their role in the world. Not only that, but Mennonites also have a worldwide reputation for effective and courageous peace and justice work.

Where was this kind of experience in my own Quaker community, I asked. I knew that in the past American Friends Service Committee work camps played that kind of role, but they had been laid down decades ago and nothing had arisen to fill their place. For older generations of Quakers, when asked what was the most important event in their lives, or what had caused them to become or remain a Quaker, or what had given rise to their long standing work for peace and justice, the answer was more often than not an AFSC work camp, or some similar experience of Quaker service. Nothing was filling this role for Quakers of my generation. At the time I myself was a recent college graduate looking to be of service in the world and longing to live in community. It was extremely challenging to find anything within the Quaker community that could support me in this. Those programs that did exist seemed to be small, often not directly recruiting Quakers, and certainly were not connected to each other so that it would be easy to find them all at once.

Increasingly I have become convinced that Quakers need an organization parallel to those that exist in other denominations such as Mennonite Voluntary Service, Brethren Volunteer Service, Jesuit Volunteer Corp, Lutheran Volunteer Corps and the like which would pick up where the work camps ended. These programs all operate in generally the same pattern which is to have multiple houses of small groups of volunteers in different parts of the country. These volunteers commit to one year of service and they live together in intentional community and work in local agencies or service organizations. They incorporate study, reflection, and elements from their denominational traditions.

Stories abound of volunteers from these programs who come away transformed, with deeper commitments to whole lives of service and justice and firmer commitments to their faith. I believe that Quakers need a program that would fill this need, not only for the sake of our own community and identity, but also because we have lost something of the power and effectiveness of our corporate witness that we had been so known for in previous generations. And so early in 2008 I began the organizing of a new effort called Quaker Voluntary Service, which is now a fledgling organization.

My leading and commitment to create Quaker Voluntary Service began with a concern about how we nurture and support our young people more generally and how to provide them with transformational opportunities to live their faith and be of service to the world. In 2004 I participated in a consultation sponsored by Friends General Conference, a national umbrella organization serving mostly unprogrammed meetings, which focused on this concern. At the Consultation I was excited to connect with others who held similar visions, and the seeds of the idea of Quaker Voluntary Service were sewn. We talked about the idea for the creation of a community or more of young adults doing service, connected to a Monthly Meeting, and in an explicitly Quaker context. But the time was not yet right to try to implement this larger vision. I believe that the work the Youth Ministries Committee of Friends General Conference did over the ensuing years, as well as work happening in many corners of the Quaker world to revitalize our faith, engage prophetic witness, and empower younger and older Friends alike to articulate and live out our Quaker values set the stage for the next phase of the work.

In early 2008, in the spring before I began the Masters of Divinity program at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, I again brought up this vision, this time

with the recognition that there was a real convergence of people and groups with very similar ideas. It was clear to me that what had always felt like a leading for me personally, was a much broader leading for our Religious Society of Friends. In many places, and in various ways, there was life and movement towards religious education and spiritual formation programming for young adult Friends. Proposals, programs, projects, and calls-for-volunteers had emerged, all with the shared emphasis on volunteer service, faith-based residential community, and spiritual formation in a uniquely Quaker context. With so many people all over the country yearning for the same thing, it felt like the right time to propose another Consultation to specifically discern whether the creation of a national network or organization would be beneficial. Of course, the idea for the creation of a national network was not brand new, and there have been many Friends who have carried this vision throughout the years, many of whom have been consulted in this recent process. Yet this idea seemed to have particular resonance and life, and the time felt right to try in earnest to create something once more.

So with the support of Friends General Conference, I organized a small group to plan another Consultation to bring together representatives from current Quaker volunteer projects from around the country and those who might be interested in creating a national network. The consultation held in February 2009 was attended by thirty-six Friends from across the country, representing such organizations as Beacon Hill Friends House, Guilford College, Haverford College – Haverford House, New York Yearly Meeting's Powell House, William Penn House, AFSC-Intermountain Yearly Meeting Joint Service Project work camps, 57th Street Meeting (Chicago), New England Peace Builders Camps, the QUEST Program (Seattle), Vine Street Meeting (Berkeley), Friends General

Conference, and Pendle Hill Retreat and Study Center. Those present represented some diversity in terms of the branches of the Quaker theological spectrum.

We explored together what issues were challenging to each program, where they could use support, and what how they felt a national network could help. We held brainstorming and visioning sessions around what we even mean by service, how we can promote and enact service that is in meaningful relationships of solidarity with those we are serving, and what the fears and challenges are to succeeding in that. We discussed the word "volunteer" and various negative associations with the word, as well as positive connections to our history. We talked about what kinds of resources were needed in terms of curriculum, orientation and training for volunteers. We passionately agreed that we wanted to be able to engage in this work fully and unapologetically as Quakers with a real Quaker identity. In the end, Friends united at the Consultation around the desire and need for a national network open to all branches of the Religious Society of Friends. Additionally, Friends were excited to explore the possibility of creating new service houses to be sponsored by Monthly Meetings or Quaker organizations and supported by the national network. A small working group was formed to continue the work of creating this national network, which was soon named Quaker Voluntary Service.[4]

In the fall of 2009, we formed an advisory board to help to lead the effort. The working group carefully discerned who to invite based on a number of factors including experience with youth, service, and organizational affiliation. We intentionally wanted the board to represent the spectrum of Quaker diversity. This was achieved in the sense of having at least one representative from both Evangelical Friends Church International

[4] See Appendix A for the Epistle from this Consultation

and Conservative Friends, and several who are dually affiliated with Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference. Included on our founding board was the Superintendent of North West Yearly Meeting (Evangelical), the General Secretary of Friends General Conference, campus ministers or staff from both Guilford and Earlham Colleges (both important Quaker schools), and staff and board members of the American Friends Service Committee. We spent much time discussing the issue of what organization might serve as our fiscal sponsor. We wanted to be careful to be as open as possible to all branches of Quakers and not appear too liberal or too conservative based on what organization sponsored us. We finally agreed on Earlham School of Religion because they are perceived as relatively neutral in the Quaker landscape. They agreed to be the fiscal sponsor for QVS and we have begun receiving donations for our work.

The most immediate goal of Quaker Voluntary Service as we understand it now is to network existing Quaker volunteer and communal living projects and to support the creation of new projects and service-houses. QVS also strives to make visible on a national scale Quaker volunteer service, and to enable potential volunteers to easily access information about existing projects. More fundamentally, QVS intends to strengthen and nurture the Religious Society of Friends by providing transformational opportunities for individuals to live their Quakerism in an experience of direct service and faithful community. In the coming years, QVS hopes to offer resources such as: the creation of new service houses where young adult Quakers and likeminded people will live together in intentional community, work in local service programs, and participate in reflection and spiritual formation in relationship with a monthly meeting; an umbrella volunteer network, connecting and networking existing Quaker volunteer projects in

North America; a comprehensive website with access to information about all projects and providing the opportunity for volunteers to apply to projects in a centralized way; program development comprised of resources such as application and recruitment materials, best practices, orientation and evaluation resources, and curriculum development; a service site manual intended for monthly meetings and Quaker organizations interested in launching service houses; site support at grassroots, including site visits by QVS staff and board members, trainings and workshops on relevant issues, and gatherings like the original consultation for local program coordinators to share with each other. The broader vision is to support service in the world while providing transformational experiences in the context of the Religious Society of Friends. The QVS network seeks to facilitate and strengthen efforts to do just that.

The QVS advisory board recently approved Vision, Mission and Values statements for the organization. The process of coming to unity on these statements embodies who we hope to be as QVS. The diverse board from all over the country met together in June 2010. We worshipped, wrote, and reflected on our organizational identity and calling and drafted vision, mission and values statements which we then clarified and refined over the course of over six months. We labored together about our use of language—would some perceive it as too Christian or others as not Christian enough? We wondered how to convey our sense that service was not about coming in to communities from the outside in a charity model but rather is a vision of solidarity and mutuality. We discerned how we were lead to articulate the distinctiveness of our Quaker identity without being exclusive of any part of the Quaker family tree or to non-Quakers.

We wrestled faithfully with our own differences in understanding, and ultimately we came to unity on these statements.[5]

Though it has been a long and sometimes slow process, at moments I am overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support for the project that comes pouring in. I published an article describing the work of Quaker Voluntary Service in a newsletter printed by Friends General Conference in the winter of 2009, not really knowing if anyone read the newsletter or whether the people who did would be interested in QVS. Almost as soon as the newsletter arrived in mailboxes across the country I began receiving emails and messages from people expressing their excitement and gratitude that this work was being taken up. Many people sent donations, some of them very substantial, with notes testifying to how experiences of Quaker service had shaped and formed their lives and how they wanted to help make those kinds of experiences available for young Quakers today.

QVS is new and young and in formation. I have never felt so clearly led in any endeavor I have been a part of. It is so exciting to see a vision being born, and it is a tender and delicate process that is being midwived by many committed people. I give thanks for all of the many Friends carrying and tending to this vision for so many years and in so many ways, and I thank God that many of us were able to find each other and begin to work together. I am honored and privileged to be entrusted with the stories and memories of so many Friends about the role that service has played in their lives and I am excited about the opportunity to help make those kinds of experiences again available to young Quakers.

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[55] See Appendix B for the full text of the Vision, Mission and Values Statements

Because of my dedication to the project of Quaker Voluntary Service, I wanted a place for this work to interact with my studies and to be able to engage in more extensive reflection on some of the key issues we have encountered as we have done this work. I also wanted to offer some historical, theoretical and theological insights that may be helpful in our ongoing efforts. Through this research and reflection, I see our efforts in a broader context and understand what we are doing in a deeper way. The issues of cross-branch work, what it means to do prophetic service, how prophetic service can be understood as a religious practice, and how we might learn and grow from our history, while re-envisioning our future of service are all issues to which QVS responds. I hope our work will be enriched and deepened with the help of this research.

III. Quaker Theological History: Our Fragmented Family Tree and Why Cross-Branch Work Matters

Though Quakerism started as a unified tradition, schism and fragmentation began to occur in the 19th century. On both sides of the Atlantic, Quakerism suffered schism on a much larger scale than it ever had before. By the middle of the century in some parts of the United States, there could be as many as three Yearly Meetings claiming to be the inheritors of the true Quaker tradition in any given place. "Quakerism ceased to be a coherent whole," writes British Quaker Pink Dandelion, "and for most Quakers their own self perception ceased to be that of being the one true church."[6] In this way, Quakers came to see themselves as *part* of the true church rather than as the one true church, as had been their self perception until that time. Thus, Quakers "denominationalized."

In sociological terms, sects are defined as voluntary associations which make high demands on their members, whereas membership in denominations is more relaxed and more permissive.[7] The Quakers moved from being a sect with high demands on its members including distinctive clothing and language to being "world-affirming."[8] Whereas Quakers previously viewed even other Christians as part of the apostate world, now there was a spirit of ecumenism, and their sense of what counted as worldly shrank. Mixing with members of other denominations was partly necessary because of the dwindling number of Quakers following the period of Quietism when many people either left the Society or were disowned. But as evangelical influence grew, Quakerism opened

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[6] Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80.

[7] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Olive Wyon, trans. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 993.

[8] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 80.

its doors to the world and relaxed its sectarian attitudes. While H. Richard Niebuhr claims that Friends denominationalized in the second generation of Quakers, Dandelion and others place that process in the 19th century with the major theological schisms.[9]

One important part of the denominationalizing process was the introduction of the concept of "birthright membership." "It was a marker of a denomination in that membership was automatic rather than by voluntary confession."[10] Schism is unpleasant, and much animosity among Friends resulted. Quakers split, each group claiming to be the only true Quakers, and there was fighting over meeting houses and property as well as doctrinal truth. Some of the divisions were attributed to the resulting tension between sectarian and denominationalizing tendencies, "between the desire to remain closed, cohesive, and pure on the one hand, or more open and part of wider Christianity on the other."[11] Once split, it was easier to split again. In the 1880s, The Revivalist, Holiness, and Evangelical American Quakers responded to the growing needs of new members with the adoption of the pastoral system, and though all Quakers until this time had been unprogrammed, that is, worshipping in silence with no clergy, the implementation of the pastoral system quickly led to programming. "The first attempt at a pastoral system began as early as 1875," Dandelion tells us, but it really expanded in the 1880's.[12] The Quaker infrastructure was not well equipped to support this brand new system. There were no existing Quaker pastors and no schools or methods by which to train them. So pastors from other denominations were often hired who had to learn Quaker distinctiveness on

[9] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 81.
[10] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 81.
[11] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 92.
[12] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 110.

the job, obviously lessening again the distinctiveness and separateness of Quakers and making programmed churches more like other Christian denominations.[13] For those opposed to pastoral leadership, silence was still maintained as the most vital path to communion with God.

In Britain, the shift was made from evangelical to liberal Quakerism, but it was never in terms of liturgical or behavioral forms, as they remained completely unprogrammed there. Rather, the shift in Britain was one in disposition and thinking, which also occurred within the unprogrammed tradition in the United States.[14] While the younger generation brought in a more modernist, rational form of Quakerism, there was not the tendency towards schism that was found in the American context.[15] John Wilhelm Rowntree was an important figure in liberal Quakerism in England, and his meeting with American Quaker Rufus Jones in 1897 would prove critical to the development of liberal Quakerism in the United States. Jones was highly influential and promoted the idea that Quakerism was "essentially about group mysticism and a commitment to the social gospel."[16] He believed that if Quakers understood their history and tradition better, there would be fewer divisions. "Indeed," says Dandelion, "Jones' later work would be very much directed to bridging the divisions, particularly through service."[17] The very beginning of the American Friends Service Committee, organized in 1917 in anticipation of the need to respond to World War I, was a cross-branch effort. The initial meeting included Quakers from both unprogrammed and programmed traditions and served as "an

[13] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 111.
[14] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 118.
[15] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 118.
[16] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 122.
[17] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 123.

opportunity to bring together disparate Quaker groups to address the emergency all would face."[18] Thus from its inception, the AFSC was an explicit effort to build bridges among Friends through engaging in service together. This same bridging through service effort is one that is central to the new project of Quaker Voluntary Service.

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to locate myself in the Quaker spectrum. I grew up in the liberal, unprogrammed tradition affiliated with Friends General Conference (FGC), I have served on many committees of FGC, and I am a former staff person of the American Friends Service Committee. So, though my aim is to be inclusive of the broad range of Quaker history and theology, some of my exploration will be more relevant to the liberal unprogrammed tradition because it is what I know the best and therefore can critique most appropriately. However, I am also involved in many "cross-branch" efforts, particularly the movement of young adult Quakers which is very interested in the coming together of Quakers from all the different branches across the wide spectrum of Quaker diversity. So while my critique and analysis will focus mostly on the unprogrammed tradition, I hope this work will be relevant and appealing to any Friend who is interested in questions of service and Quaker witness.

There are some particular challenges for liberal, unprogrammed Friends that I believe have interacted in important ways with how we conceive of and enact service, which also parallel larger changes in the religious landscape. In recent decades, liberal Quaker Meetings are made up largely of religious refugees, people who have been wounded in some way by another religious tradition and find in liberal Quakerism an

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[18] Jack Sutters, compiler and Melissa Elliott, editor, *Undaunted Spirits: True Stories of Quaker Service* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 2002) 20.

accepting and open faith community where dogmatic creeds are nowhere to be found and antiauthoritarian views fit nicely into the flat hierarchy inherent in the Quaker structure. In an honest effort not to repeat the harmful experiences they had had in the churches of their youths, the adults in my community hardly ever talked about their beliefs or the Christian history of Quakerism. I remember learning a lot about other religious traditions but not very much about my own, and we certainly never studied the Bible.

When asked today what Quakers believe, the usual response is "it depends on whom you ask." This response would have been completely foreign to any Quaker just a few generations before. In only a few generations, liberal Quakerism has lost it deep footing in the Christian tradition and has become much more a group of people with shared social and political values than a church with shared religious beliefs. In similar fashion, many evangelical Quaker churches have lost their distinctive Quaker identities. It is my conviction that no matter how good our social and political values may be, they do not provide deep enough grounding to sustain, nourish, inspire and guide us as we engage in the world. It is my generation, the heirs of the liberalizing and secularizing process, who are experiencing the losses in their fullness and are attempting to reclaim and revitalize our tradition. The way we engage in service was also directly impacted by this process, as the religious grounding for service became less and less articulated. I believe there is a way to be deeply rooted in a particular tradition without being exclusive, and that direct service provides unique possibilities for this kind of sharing.

The history of my faith community clearly demonstrates some of the patterns of modernization which make up the multilayered process of secularization. It is now very common for Americans to change denominational affiliation, sometimes more than once,

and sometimes becoming unaffiliated completely. According to a 2009 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study, half of former Protestants who have become unaffiliated with the church say they left their childhood faith "because they stopped believing in its teachings," and about forty percent say they became unaffiliated "because they do not believe in God or the teachings of most religions."[19] Many people also reported leaving a faith because they perceived religious people to be hypocritical or dishonest. These would be typical responses in my Quaker Meeting as to why people left the churches of their childhood and eventually became Quakers. The vast majority of Quakers in the United States today did not grow up in a longstanding Quaker family. It is also the general pattern that with more education comes more critical questioning of orthodox teachings. An increase in education levels also leads to anti-authoritarian tendencies, according to Robert Bellah.[20]

Classic secularization theory contends that as societies become more educated and wealthier they also become less religious. This understanding has been questioned and debated in more recent times, both because it is too simplistic and also because it can be argued that religion does not actually decline as much as it relocates and changes in character and expression. That is, the ways of being religious change but this does not necessarily mean that religious beliefs and practices themselves disappear. Three elements of modernity in particular have affected religion, according to James Hunter.

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[19] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Faith in Flux," April 2009, www.pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux.aspx.

[20] Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post Traditionalist World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970) 219.

These elements are "functional rationality, cultural pluralism and structural pluralism."[21] Functional rationalization means the "infusion of rational controls through all spheres of human experience" which has the result of making religious belief and commitment "much more tenuous for the man on the street." [22] Rufus Jones is credited with helping to infuse the rational and modern spirit into liberal American Quakerism.

The second element, cultural pluralism, means simply that as societies become more heterogeneous there is more diversity and interaction among cultures and subcultures with different ideas, beliefs and practices. Because formerly held convictions can now be compared to differing beliefs held by other groups, this can cause cognitive dissonance. A person will have to engage in questioning "the veracity of his beliefs and the consideration of the possibility of the truth of the beliefs of another."[23] As Peter Berger explains it, secularization helps to create and maintain the arrangements under which pluralism thrives, "while the plurality of world views undermines the plausibility of each one and thus contributes to the secularizing tendency."[24] Structural pluralism is "the historically unique dichotomization of life into public and private spheres."[25] While in pre-modern America the church was the center of all village life and provided multiple services to the community, in modern American society, services are provided by governmental and countless other institutions and agencies. Every sphere—politics, the

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[21] James Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983) 12.
[22] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 12.
[23] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 13.
[24] Peter Berger, "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity," in *Religion and America*, ed. Mary Douglas and Steven Tipton. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983) 15.
[25] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 13.

economy, science, art, education—all have their own autonomy and separate logic now and are not controlled directly by the church.

The result of structural pluralism, Hunter argues, is that religion is relegated to the private sphere. Religion is presumed then to be private, depoliticized, and may become exclusively about the "satisfaction of personal or subjective needs."[26] Religion becomes more interior, individualistic, and private, this argument says. This phenomenon is certainly at play when it comes to Quaker service. Though Quakers used to be directly involved in the service work of the American Friends Service Committee, or even through their Monthly Meetings, for example, now AFSC mostly operates as any other nonprofit organization. Quakers write checks to them but they do not participate directly in the work they do. Many individual Quakers are involved in various efforts towards peace and justice, but by and large these efforts are through other organizations, individual actions, or indirect work such as lobbying and legislation.

All of these factors contribute in important ways to what Hunter calls the "deinstitutionalization of religious reality" in the lives and world views of contemporary people.[27] Deinstitutionalization means, concretely, that there are now an endless number of options and choices we must make about our everyday lives. Religious world views are not necessarily denied, he says, but they do become less plausible and "the truth or falseness of religion becomes a matter of individual choice."[28] So, religion becomes one more arena for the market, where people shop for and choose the one they like best and

[26] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 14.
[27] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 14.
[28] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 14.

religions compete for adherents.[29] It is this possibility of choice and the necessity to choose that perhaps most distinguishes the modern religious situation in America from a pre-modern time. This situation is presumably true for everyone, and it is certainly true for Quakers.

We can affirm then that religious belief is not necessarily outright rejected, but it is problematized and questioned and requires decision. "Although only a small percentage of modern people have abandoned a commitment to religious truth," Hunter tells us, "most people in modern societies have at least become deeply perplexed by the ambiguities posed by these structural features of modernity."[30] As Hunter so clearly puts it, "there is something about modernity that erodes the plausibility of religious belief and weakens the influence of religious symbols in the social structure and culture at large."[31] Yet there also seems to be something about religious belief and the religious world view that resists and endures these challenges and changes. I argue that the way our service efforts have changed is a direct result of this modernizing process, as Quakers and the AFSC struggled to be relevant and intelligible to the larger culture.

Given the perplexities and the necessity of choice created by differentiation and deinstitutionalization, the responses of religion and religious people are varied. "There is no single pattern of secularization or even accommodation constant for all religions in all situations, nor is there any single and uniform expression of religious resistance to modernity," Hunter tells us.[32] Two extreme and characteristic responses are resistance on

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[29] Berger "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity," 22.
[30] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 14.
[31] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 4.
[32] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 18.

the one hand or accommodation on the other. Modernity, pluralism, and the resulting ambiguity, confusion, and endless choices can create a hunger for religious certainty and for a sense of restored community that has been lost.[33] The pressure to recognize and affirm a variety of competing religious world views will require a choice or a compromise. One response is to say that everyone is correct and that all beliefs are true. This is the direction in which the liberal, unprogrammed Quaker tradition has gone, to affirm that each person and tradition can have a legitimate claim on the truth. The negative effect of this response is that it relativizes all truth, and leaves nothing with any strong meaning or hold. The effort to be inclusive of all truth claims led directly to the abandoning of the work camp programs of direct service when they were criticized and a weakening of the religious articulation of service efforts.

The other option is to ignore plurality and assert your exclusive truth over against any competing claims. This is what American Evangelicals do according to Hunter, and it is generally the stance of Evangelical Quakers as well.[34] These two extreme reactions are what Rebecca Chopp calls on the one hand reducing faith to "psychologism," which is "emptying the faith of ecclesial form and substance and translating it into individual feelings" or on the other hand faith becomes "empiricism" which is "reducing faith to a set of ideas or words…a mere code, a set of indisputable truths." [35] Again, the spectrum of Quakerism contains both extremes and our efforts at direct service were affected by these changes.

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[33] Berger "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity," 20.
[34] Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 17.
[35] Rebecca Chopp, "Bearing Witness: Traditional Faith in Contemporary Expression," Quarterly Review: A Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry, Volume 19, Number 3 (1997) 194.

The marketplace of free choice can produce confusion and unrest. Endless choices can indeed be a burden rather than a source of liberation. "Human beings," Berger says, "have a deeply rooted urge for certainty and faith, and the endless openness of pluralism…is difficult to bear."[36] This has certainly been true in my experience—because of the openness and intended freedom my tradition has recently embraced, there are no well-defined boundaries which serve to protect and set limits within which to explore. Yet Robert Bellah offers an alternative way to view this process of modernization and religious change which is more hopeful. It is clear, he says, "that modern religious consciousness is different from that in previous epochs"[37] but the differences are positive, according to him. Bellah's affirmation opens the doorway for the possibility of using the insights and growth that has occurred with modernity, many of which certainly have been hugely positive, to go back and reclaim older traditions. This is what Quaker Voluntary Service strives to do—to take the best of the insights of modernism within our faith and modernity in the larger society, along with the best of the insights of tradition and the past, to revitalize and reclaim direct, prophetic Quaker service.

Today, the spectrum of Quaker diversity is incredibly broad. In the United States, there are three major national umbrella organizations: Evangelical Friends Church International is the most evangelical and conservative and all of their churches are pastoral; Friends United Meeting (FUM) has both pastoral and unprogrammed meetings and churches, but most are pastoral. Friend United Meeting does not set policy for its

[36] Berger "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity," 20.
[37] Bellah, *Beyond Belief,* 227.

constituent Yearly Meetings though it does affirm the Richmond Declaration of Faith.[38] Though Rufus Jones influenced FUM "towards a modernist agenda," Holiness and Fundamentalist meetings are still present within FUM. FUM is a member of the World Council of Churches and a few FUM yearly meetings are dually affiliated with Friends General Conference (FGC).[39] Friends General Conference is primarily unprogrammed and liberal, including many members who consider themselves to be Universalists rather than Christians. FGC simply provides services to its constituent yearly meetings such as resources for religious education, publications, and an annual gathering for fellowship and worship. The Conservative Yearly Meetings are small in number. They maintain a more Christo-centric but unprogrammed worship, so they are conservative in the sense of conserving tradition, though they hold a variety of political perspectives. There are also a number of unaffiliated meetings and yearly meetings.

Liberal Friends tend to define themselves in terms of their behavioral creed, not so much by belief or doctrine whereas evangelical Friends are much more focused on belief and on personal salvation. Experience is primary and sufficient for Liberal Friends in terms of spiritual authority, whereas Conservative Friends blend the primacy of experience with Scripture, and Evangelicals emphasize Scripture over experience. For liberal Friends, experience does not need to be confirmed by Scripture in order to be considered true. Though an understanding of and background in scripture among Friends was assumed by Rufus Jones and others of his time who were raised in evangelical households, increasing numbers of newcomers have flocked to liberal Quakerism without

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[38] See Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 181. The Richmond Declaration of Faith was adopted in 1887 and affirmed Gurneyite theology and is firmly against water Baptism.
[39] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 182.

scriptural background.[40] Liberal and Conservative Friends identify first as Quaker, then as Christian (or not), whereas Evangelicals tend to define themselves as Christians who happen to be Quakers. There is no visible leadership in unprogrammed meetings whereas there are pastors and other leaders in the programmed tradition. The differences go on and on.

Given this huge diversity, it is difficult to find common ground. Pink Dandelion suggests that there are three main areas of commonality which he defines as, "the emphasis on inward encounter, business method, and testimony."[41] All Friends, he says, remain committed to the direct and immediate personal encounter with God. What is different is how that experience is described and interpreted. Additionally, all Friends attempt to seek the will of God in their business practices without voting. And third, Friends have maintained a testimony against war from the beginning of the movement. Yet, this third element can be weaker in the more evangelical traditions and has never been practiced by all members consistently in any of the traditions. "The more Friends churches identify as Christian as opposed to Quaker, the more permissive the teaching in this area."[42]

Directly relevant to my purposes is how Quakers understand service and social witness. For liberal Friends (Dandelion refers to these Friends as modernists) any sense of mission turned to a focus on service.[43] "By the 1970's in Britain, the successor bodies

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[40] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 187.
[41] Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 245.
[42] Dandelion *Introduction to Quakerism*, 246.
[43]Dandelion *Introduction to Quakerism*, 162.

to those concerned with mission were strictly concerned with peace and social witness."[44] This shift among liberal Friends reflected a reinterpretation or reapplication of the traditional understanding of the testimony against war. Now, this testimony shifted to become a "peace testimony," which resulted in much broader work for peace and justice than had previously been conceived by simply being against war.[45] Service work did, however, still succeed in bringing more people into Quakerism. "Service work did bring about the fruits of mission," Dandelion tells us. Quakerism grew in areas where relief work had been done, such as Germany and Japan, and many Quakers came to the faith through participation in service or peace work.[46]

In the past century, Friends across this theological spectrum, particularly those affiliated with FUM and FGC, did a fairly good job of working together on issues of peace and justice. Rufus Jones in particular influenced the ecumenical spirit of service work among Friends. Many yearly meetings which had suffered splits were reunited (New England Yearly Meeting in 1945, Philadelphia, New York, and Canada each in the mid 1950s) due in large part to "joint service work and connections between young Friends."[47] The American Friends Service Committee was founded in order to provide alternative service for conscientious objectors, and those ranks came from across yearly meetings and theological lines. However, as the forces of modernity have influenced liberal Quakerism to become more liberal and universalist while pushing evangelical Quakerism to become more evangelical and less Quaker, and as opportunities for direct

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[44] Dandelion *Introduction to Quakerism*, 162.
[45] Dandelion *Introduction to Quakerism*, 162.
[46] Dandelion *Introduction to Quakerism*, 163.
[47]Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 166.

service together have nearly disappeared, this ability to work together has lessened. Meanwhile, the American Friends Service Committee has become less Quaker in character and more like any other nonprofit, activist organization in a process very like what was outlined by Hunter as the deinstitutionalization process of modernity. Though there were important reasons for the change in focus of the work of AFSC, I believe the richness and vitality of our tradition becomes weaker and that our social and political work also becomes weaker when we lose our historical connection to direct service done out of religious convictions.

Though it is true that Quakers today by no means have a common understanding of service, I believe that a renewed focus on Quaker prophetic service, as is being attempted in the organization of Quaker Voluntary Service, could allow us to bring together our understandings and share and learn from each other, making all Quaker service stronger and more faithful. Prophetic service could again function as a point of unification around a common purpose as it has in the past. Our efforts to start a cross-branch Quaker organization focused on young people and transformational opportunities for service have been exciting and challenging. Not all voices are at the table, and we do not all speak the same language when we come to the table. An attempt to articulate shared convictions and understandings about the role of service for each respective branch of the Quaker family tree, as well as exploring how our communities suffer internally and spiritually when we do not have these opportunities and experiences, needs to be undertaken by all of us.

There are many reasons to reach out across theological schisms and attempt to heal those divides. It is perhaps obvious that we have a weakened witness for peace and

reconciliation in the world when we ourselves are not reconciled to each other. If we were successful in bringing some unity among Quaker factions through our service work, it would be a powerful witness to the possibilities of healing and reconciliation that we aim for in so much of our work in the world. I also believe that in the case of the Quaker disunity, each tradition has much to teach the others as well as much to learn. I believe that all of our work and witness will be more faithful and more prophetic if we can learn from the best of each other's practice of Quakerism.

I grew up in the Charlotte Friends Meeting, a liberal unprogrammed meeting. My experience of Quakerism early in life revolved around community, social justice, and peace. Though we learned about Quaker historical figures and other religious traditions, it was rare that we studied the Bible. As I grew older, and through experiences like the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage where I met Friends from programmed traditions and studied Quaker roots, and as a Religious Studies major in college, I began to realize that I had missed a lot by not being taught more about my own tradition and by not being given much by way of theological tools and language for understanding myself as a Friend. I inferred that older Friends in the Meeting, many of whom had come to Quakerism from other religious traditions, did not want to impose any beliefs on us, and particularly not ones that they had experienced as oppressive. Yet as I have discovered religious language that speaks to me and anchors me, and as I delve deeper into the richness of Quaker tradition, I am increasingly convinced that the lack of grounding in tradition and religious language directly relates to the fact that so many younger Friends from liberal Meetings disappear from our Society after they leave high school. This weak set of tools for articulating and understanding our faith also hinders The Religious Society of Friends

from engaging in the kind of work it takes to be prophetic, authentic, and relevant. I have also come to believe that Quakers of all branches, but especially the liberal unprogrammed variety, would be more deeply grounded in our faith tradition if there were more opportunities for direct and prophetic Quaker service.

One of the most important learnings for me that came out of the World Gathering of Young Friends, in August 2005 in Lancaster, England, which brought together young adult Quakers from across the globe and every conceivable theological perspective, was a deepened sense that Friends across the theological spectrum are all missing pieces of what the early Friends found, and what allowed them to be such radical, prophetic witnesses in the world. At the World Gathering, young adult Friends from all over the world had the opportunity to come together to dialogue, to worship and fellowship together, and to experience our differences and similarities. None of us could say with integrity that we had the claim on true Quakerism, and this allowed us to open ourselves to learning from each other, not judging but rather trying to deeply understand the context and history that we each came from. In addition, though challenged and inspired by our common roots, it was equally clear that we must ready ourselves for the eventuality that God will call us to new and as yet unimagined ways of living and being. This sharing across branches and within Quakerism is itself participation in the kind of positive pluralism which can strengthen our collective witness. I believe that Quaker Voluntary Service will offer more opportunities for young adult Friends to learn from each other and be inspired into deeper faithfulness.

The early Friends, who we hold up as our models and examples, made radical social and political choices, but this action came directly out of a transformative

experience with the Spirit. Early Friends did not conceive of the testimonies as we refer to them today. Rather, they had direct experiences with the living Spirit that inspired them to make radical changes in their life styles. They testified with their lives that if you are transformed in the Spirit, then it necessarily follows that you will live in such a way that you embody justice and right relationship. For those of us struggling to live lives of integrity, relying simply on liberal language without theological depth does not ground and inspire us to the extent necessary for this work. We should not merely hope that Friends will accidentally stumble across the powerful and rich tools we have available to us in our own tradition, but rather intentionally nurture our communities to engage with each other in deeper ways, naming gifts, holding each other accountable, and educating ourselves about the vital practices within our tradition. Prophetic service is one such component of the treasures of our tradition.

Chapter V will look more extensively at what is meant by the term "prophetic" in relation to service, but it is useful to look briefly at what it means to be prophetic in the context of examining why cross-branch work is important. Old Testament scholar Walter Bruggemann, in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, says that "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[48] The role of the prophet is complex, and there are two important characteristics of prophetic ministry which can be simply characterized as critique and hope. Put another way, prophetic ministry necessarily works to dismantle the dominant consciousness and resist it, and also to energize a hopefulness, to envision newness, and affirm God's promise for fulfilling it.

[48] Walter Bruggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 13.

It would be too simple to say that liberal Friends do the critiquing but are short on the fervent hope, and that evangelical Friends are full of hopeful energy but do not focus on resisting the dominant culture in a justice oriented way, but there is some truth in this generalization. I do believe that if we can come to see each of these roles as necessary and important, we will be able to learn more from each other, and understand that we need each other's experiences and traditions if we are to be prophetic and relevant today.

Some of this began to happen at the World Gathering of Young Friends. For example, through dialogue around difficult issues, it was clear that as a white, privileged North American, it is essential to the integrity of my spiritual grounding that I learn from the experience, practice, and belief of my friend Saul, who comes from an evangelical and socially conservative Friends Church in Honduras, just as he can learn from the social and political commitments that I have made. There are many opportunities for sharing across race, class, and theological lines within our own communities as well as on a wider scale. This sharing has to be ongoing and touch all aspects of our lives if it is to move us into deeper prophetic space. [49] I believe that we have much to learn from the way service functioned communally in the past to heal schism, promote dialogue, and form and shape generations of Quakers. Bringing together voices from across the spectrum of Quaker diversity would enable a more prophetic witness.

[49] For a similar and more extensive exploration of these themes see Christina Repoley, "The Prophetic Journey," *Friends Journal*, October 2006.

IV. History of Quaker Service: What Were the Work Camps and What Happened to Them?

Though it is well beyond the scope of this paper to give anything close to a full account of the history of Quaker service efforts, or even only those opportunities for youth and young adults that took shape primarily as work camps in the American Friends Service Committee and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, among others places, I would like to try to capture a sense of what these programs were like. I will focus here on a small bit of the history of the work camp programs of the AFSC. There are vast resources in the archives of the AFSC which could be explored at more length in another research project.

According to the publication *Undaunted Spirits: True Stories of Quaker Service* compiled by AFSC in honor of the organization's 85th anniversary, one of the most important and popular of the AFSC's programs was the summer work camps, established in 1934. "The United States was going through the Great Depression, and some young people were losing hope in the future. It was felt that participating in some kind of summer activity that would contribute to positive solutions—no matter how small—would help them regain a positive outlook."[50] In the summer of 1934, fifty-five young people contributed 10,000 hours at a project in western Pennsylvania called Norvelt, which dealt with subsistence homesteading. They spent their days digging a ditch and installing a new water supply system for the community. "They spent evenings discussing economic and social problems that had contributed to the depression." [51] David Ritchie was among the first group of work campers, and he later developed the

[50] Sutters and Elliott, *Undaunted Spirits*, 74.
[51] Sutters and Elliott, *Undaunted Spirits*, 75.

weekend work camps for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting which served and influenced many Quaker and non-Quaker youth. In reference to this same 1934 work camp, a history of the American Friends Service Committee published in 1937 says, "this camp was an experiment in giving an opportunity for young people to obtain firsthand knowledge of difficult social and industrial problems in conflict areas by working in the communities, to explore the possibilities of social change by nonviolent technique and to perform some worthwhile job of social significance during the summer."[52]

Based on this initial experiment, AFSC continued to develop work camps in the US and abroad. In the summer of 1936, sixty-eight volunteer workers served in twenty institutions located in eleven states. "They worked in detention homes, migrant work centers, health camps, settlement houses, camps for underprivileged children, Indian reservations, mining towns, Negro schools, reform schools, and rural communities."[53] Literature presented to work campers in the summer of 1937 described their work this way: "Laboring with one's hands makes it possible, as nothing else can, to understand realistically the problems of the working class…Work camps are laboratories in which problems of human relations and basic motivations may be experienced."[54] And in material used with work campers in 1940, it is stated, "Here we come to understand more fully the root causes of violence. Here we may work at the problems of building a more adequate economic structure—thus partially relieving the occasion for violence…Class

[52] Mary Hoxie Jones, *Swords into Plowshares: An Account of the American Friends Service Committee 1917-1937* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971), 208.
[53] Jones, M, *Swords into Plowshares*, 207.
[54] Jones, M, *Swords into Plowshares*, 211.

and race barriers tend to disappear in the fellowship of hard physical labor."[55] This same material indicates that the work camps are to be opportunities to genuinely contribute to the welfare of a local community where there is an ongoing, well established relationship, as well as providing an avenue to explore "a new way of life,"[56] which included daily meditation and decision making using the Quaker process of consensus or sense of the meeting. In this way, work was combined with reflection and Quaker practices.

An evaluation of the AFSC work camps published in 1952 notes that though the locations and projects are varied, in all cases "some sort of service-oriented activity (almost always involving physical labor) is carried out in an area of social or economic tension or conflict, most frequently in situations where there is interracial conflict or where a depressed and disadvantaged economic group has been unable to provide itself with certain kinds of community facilities."[57] Throughout the literature on the work camp projects, it is clear that the work was understood to be both community development, personal character development, and spiritual development, with an emphasis on learning ways to respond to problems and conflict through nonviolent methods. In a 1951 lecture at Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia, Clarence Pickett, then the Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee spoke of the goal of training in nonviolence saying, "It is important that those who choose to avail themselves of exemption from military service be helped to develop a real alternative to the pursuit of violence and to continue in a variety of adventures in building the world of fellowship and of decency for people of

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[55] Rebecca Janney, compiler, "Evaluations of 12 Quaker Summer Work Camps," 1940, courtesy of the AFSC Archives, ii.

[56] Janney, "Evaluations of 12 Quaker Summer Work Camps," iii.

[57] Henry W. Riecken, *The Volunteer Work Camp: A Psychological Evaluation* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Press, 1952), 26.

all kinds, friends and enemy. To that end, with the best wisdom and the greatest financial support of which we are capable should be channeled into creative projects at home and abroad where the alternative values to force and violence can be demonstrated."[58]

Anecdotally, it is clear that these work camps had a profound impact on the volunteer participants. The work camps hold a kind of mythical power in the collected tradition and wisdom of the Quaker community. And yet, in the 1960s they were virtually discontinued. The reasons for the ending of the work camps are varied and complex, and again, it is well beyond the scope of this investigation to be thorough in assessing these factors. The reasons that are discussed, again anecdotally, in Quaker "lore" include two primary issues. The first is the critique of the work camps as operating in a kind of paternalistic fashion, that despite the rhetoric of the camps the volunteers were mostly educated, middle to upper class white youth coming into poor, working class areas and offering charity. The second was, simply put, the sex, drugs, and rock n roll of the 1960's youth culture which prevented the work camps from operating as they had previously. In my investigations I have found that there is no clear or linear articulation of the reasons for discontinuing the programs. Without a much more extensive research project the best that can be done is to give a sampling of the factors that were at play. It seems clear from all accounts that there was a marked shift from the generations participating in the first decades of the programs to the generation of the 1960's and beyond. Obviously many factors in the wider culture were also at play in these changes, and there seem to be many different perspectives on what happened.

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[58] Clarence Pickett, "And Having Done All to Stand," William Penn Lecture delivered at Arch Street Meeting House, (Philadelphia, 1951), 18.

In an interview with Paul Lacey, retired Earlham College professor and immediate past Chair of the AFSC Board of Directors, I learned one perspective of what happened to the work camp programs. He told me that there was certainly a critique leveled at all faith based service programs around the time of the publication of Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* in 1965. Cox critiqued projects like the work camps and said they failed because they were coming in from the outside, not making real change. Lacey says that book and similar critiques of service were "conversation stoppers."[59] He also said that with the influence of the 1960's in general, the more liberal people become, the harder it was to get people to think about the needs of the whole group as opposed to personal satisfaction. Lacey remembers a staff meeting of the AFSC he attended one summer while on a break from graduate school where reports about the AFSC work camps were given. The meeting, he said, was "hair-raising." Every person reported that volunteers did not want to be imposed on by anyone else, did not want to abide by anyone else's rules, but wanted it to be done their own way. For example, he said there was a situation in Richmond where high school students decided that making out interracially on the community center steps was the way to make a statement about racism. From that time on there was no opportunity to have a work camp in Richmond. "Things fell apart all over the place because people wanted to do whatever they wanted to do. This is when the Service Committee stopped having work camps," Lacey said.[60] AFSC was unable to find staff willing to live with the problems being created by young people who thought they should never be subjected to rules. "The extremes of the late

[59] Personal Interview with Paul Lacey, January 2011.
[60] Interview with Lacey, January 2011.

Vietnam era did in the work camp programs," Lacey recounts. "Nobody was willing to take the responsibility for leading such pampered and indulged kids, all of whom were probably genuine in wanting to serve but they were so influenced by the larger culture."[61]

In a memorandum written to the Youth Service Opportunities committee of AFSC by its director, Marty Dickson, entitled "Young Persons and the AFSC, 1968," observations about wider youth culture in the 1960's and its impact on the AFSC youth programs are made.[62] Dickson notes that in the 1960's there was an increasing number of young applicants for work in AFSC programs and "there seemed to be some implicit relationship between this increased number of applicants and the increased activity on the part of the US in Vietnam."[63] Concern was expressed that this new batch of young people "were activists and consequently the more traditional concept of service was outdated and ineffectual."[64] These youth, which Dickson describes as "post-modern" were thought to have very different needs from the youth who had participated in AFSC programs in earlier generations, and thus it seems that service programs were reconceived based on new needs of a new generation. That youth in the late 1960's were perceived to be a new generation, defined as post-modern activists who did not want to engage in traditional patterns of Quaker religious service, fits well with the overall patterns of secularization traced in the previous chapter. The traditional model of the AFSC youth work was described as including, "group living and working, meditation, decision making through

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[61] Interview with Lacey, January 2011.
[62] Marty Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC, 1968," working paper presented to the Youth Service Opportunities Committee of the American Friends Service Committee, October 2, 1968, Courtesy of the AFSC Archives.
[63] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 2.
[64] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 3.

democratic process, adult leadership, education, and service."[65] The working paper reports one young volunteer confessing, "I am truly a lost soul in this world."[66]

Dickson closes her report by reflecting on the young people who founded the American Friends Service Committee, and she challenges some of the assumptions that the organization was making about these "new" postmodern, activist young people. She says that the founders of AFSC were also radicals seeking many of the same things that the new Vietnam era, postmodern youth are seeking. "There was, however, one profound difference: the Committee grew out of a group of radical young people who together formed a community of believers that the processes they used and explored were infinitely founded in man's direct relationship to his religious belief…essential Quakerism…a religious center."[67] Dickson asserts that though they may not be able to articulate it in religious terms, she believes that the young people who came to the AFSC in the 1960's were in fact searching for a "contemporary religious center." Though they have access to many other methods and opportunities, "yet they choose to seek out those 'new forms' historically found in Quakerism and its methodology…"[68] She observes that it is that very religious core of Quakerism that the young people seek and she states that "it is we in the AFSC who struggle to know how to make this process relevant in these troubled times."[69]

In other words, Dickson asserts that the young people coming to AFSC in the 1960's, though experiencing new things with the massive cultural shift taking place,

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[65] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 4.
[66] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 10.
[67] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 12.
[68] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 12-13.
[69] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 13.

came to the AFSC out of all the other possibilities because they in fact wanted to experience the Quaker religious core of the organization. It was the organization itself, not the youth, who might have been preventing this fulfillment because the organization had lost its religious grounding. She closes her report with what to me is a prophetic challenge for the AFSC which still rings true: "Can an institution offer to its constituency that which it may have ceased to consider vital to its own existence?"[70] Thus, in Dickson's assessment in 1969, it is not that the new generation caused the demise of the work camp programs as much as it was the failure of the organization to be able to respond to their needs by remaining grounded in its Quaker religious identity and historical practices. This continues to be a challenge for AFSC, and it is one reason why Quaker Voluntary Service is called for. Rather than being an organization which operates merely from a basis of Quaker values, Quaker Voluntary Service aims to be an organization that uses and teaches vital Quaker practices.

There also seems to have been an effort to incorporate youth into the overall structure of the organization, rather than limiting their participation to the work camp programs, and some reports indicate that this desire came directly from the young people themselves. A minute of the board on January 1, 1971 notes that the old structure failed to achieve its objective to "infuse youth into every program... [with] the result [of] 'youth tokenism'…in the national office."[71] And by the early 1980's it seems that the organization no longer saw its role as providing service opportunities to Quaker youth. A board minute from April 22, 1983 states that "The Executive Committee affirmed that

[70] Dickson, "Young Persons and the AFSC," 15.
[71] AFSC Board Minute dated January 1, 1971, courtesy of the AFSC Archives.

youth work is integral to AFSC, but that it is primarily the job of Friends General Conference and individual Yearly and Quarterly Meetings to respond to the needs of Quaker youth. AFSC's role is to address the issues of justice, quality of life, and basic human survival."[72] Not only does this minute reflect the changing attitude toward the role of Quaker youth in the organization, but it also clearly shows that by this time the AFSC is most closely affiliated with the liberal, unprogrammed Quaker organization of Friend General Conference, rather than with all Friends.

Interestingly, it is these two organizations—Friends General Conference and the American Friends Service Committee—who are in active conversation about partnering with Quaker Voluntary Service today. I believe that when AFSC stated that it was no longer responsible for nurturing or serving Quaker youth, and passed that responsibility on to FGC and others, FGC did not take up that work to the extent that the hole left by AFSC programming required. It was not until 2004 that FGC began to programmatically consider how it might better support and nurture youth and young adults, and effort closely connected to the emergence of Quaker Voluntary Service. The gap of over 30 years when neither organization had much focus on Quaker youth proved damaging to our faith community, making the task of Quaker Voluntary Service all the more challenging and vital.

Thus the opportunities for Quaker youth to engage in projects of direct service diminished greatly, and the work camp programs were discontinued. Again, this brief exploration paints only a very small part of the picture and I have no doubt left out much important information. But the primary issues raised by the sources I have been able to

[72] AFSC Board Minute dated April 22, 1983, courtesy of the AFSC Archives.

access indicate that some of the major concerns included the critique of the way the work was being carried out (coming in from the outside, paternalism, etc.), the changing needs and attitudes of the youth generation of the 1960's, the loss of emphasis on Quaker religious conviction and decision making practices, the loss of Quaker theological diversity in the work of AFSC, and later, the shift in focus of the organization from Quaker youth to broader issues of justice.

Though it is easy looking back on this history to place blame or judgment for the decisions that were made, this is not my aim. Again employing a hermeneutics of both suspicion and generosity, I believe that all were acting with the best of intentions and according to the light that was given to them. I do, however, believe that the loss of direct programs of service such as the work camps, with an explicit Quaker emphasis, that were not taken up by any other Quaker organization, has had a tremendously negative impact on our Society of Friends. I want to argue that service properly understood and enacted as "prophetic service" is a formative religious practice not only with implications for the Quaker community but also for the wider places where this service is enacted.

V. Prophetic Service: Practicing Presence and Embodying Hope

Rufus Jones served as the Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the American Friends Service Committee from 1917 to 1937. He had a profound impact on modern Quakerism, as has already been mentioned, as well as on how service work was done in the Religious Society of Friends. I am using his phrase "prophetic service" to talk about the kind of service I want to promote. This term is useful to distinguish it from a more mundane kind of service which is not spiritually or communally grounded or motivated by a deep encounter with God. The very term service, along with the related term volunteer, has indeed come to have a somewhat negative connotation in the minds of progressives as it can conjure up images of paternalistic charity work which does nothing to promote real change of unjust systems. As Margaret Miles says in *Practicing Christianity*, the so-called "good-works that temporarily alleviate individual pain through 'charity' seem to many Christians to be inadequate responses to the need of the world."[73] She is critical of Christians who have engaged in service but have not considered working to transform unjust social arrangements an essential part of that service. She claims that the rhetoric of Christian service, "loaded as it is with connotations of covert complacency, has become irredeemably counterproductive," and urges Christians engaged in service to conceive of what they are doing in new ways.[74] Because of the many different ways of practicing and understanding service, and especially because of

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[73] Margaret Miles, *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 117.
[74] Miles, *Practicing Christianity,* 124.

the negative associations which often come to mind when the term is used, it is important to be clear about what is meant by the term “prophetic service” as used by Jones and advanced in the work of Quaker Voluntary Service before we go any further.

A fuller understanding of what Jones means by “prophetic service” is gleaned by looking at the larger quotation that the term is taken from. He says,

> As the Quaker faith is inherently allied to the Quaker way of worship, so also the Quaker impulsion to take up and share "the burden of the world's suffering" springs out of the central faith and intimate fellowship of worship...we should lose the essential mark and badge of our calling if we should allow our Quaker service, our mission to oppressed humanity, to drop to the purely secular level...We approach all problems with a peculiar faith that man is potentially a child of God, a being of infinite worth… If we work to change outward conditions, to transform oppressive social and economic systems, to destroy war, to remove brutal forms of punishment and every method of violence, we are all the time concerned to enable man to have better opportunities to come up to his full stature as a man, which cannot be fully done until society itself becomes more richly organized. The method of such human service, if it is to be genuinely Quaker service, that is, 'intelligent,' 'spiritual' service, must be a method that is consistent with the way and spirit of love. It cannot run on a level with the secular theory of force. Its way is deeply sacrificial and costly. It gives and shares, not merely goods and money, but life itself. It enters sympathetically and with an understanding mind in the heart and condition of those who suffer and who are to be helped. It travails and suffers with them and it aims to make a different world through its love and its effort...The real hope of such a worker is to be an organ through which the divine Life can break in and come into play. One of the most important missions of a Society like ours is its prophetic service."[75]

We understand from this description, that prophetic service develops directly out of worship. This is not service to be undertaken out of a mere desire to help another person, or based solely on a set of values, but rather service that comes out of the deepest

[75] Rufus Jones, "The Spiritual Message of the Religious Society of Friends,” (World Conference Report of Commission I, 1937), 7-16.

experience of human solidarity and love and that requires entering a deep commitment to the other person, a sharing of life itself.

Jones warns that this kind of service cannot fall to the "merely secular level" if it is to retain its distinction and its power. David Tracy speaks of the danger of the secularizing trend in relation to the way in which we are public about our faith convictions and the reasons for our actions. He is critical of practical theology that focuses on the development of techniques and skills which can operate separately from the ethical and theological underpinnings of those skills. He says, "Only techniques and skills are allowed to play a genuinely public role. Moral and religious praxis…have become privatized…The result is that both the theological and the ethical critical theoretical components become, in effect, remainder concepts. We are left with public techniques but only private religious and moral values."[76] Unfortunately, it is my belief that this is precisely what has happened by and large to the service efforts currently undertaken by Friends, especially in the form of the work of the American Friends Service Committee, as we saw in the previous chapter. Not only do we not articulate publicly the religious grounding of our actions, but we also begin to in fact lose the religious grounding all together. Our work might be spoken of as being loosely based on Quaker values (so not purely secular) but it is no longer based on Quaker religious practices and experiences. This secularization of our service work is directly connected to the larger patterns of secularization and deinstitutionalization already discussed.

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[76] David Tracy, "The Foundations of Practical Theology," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, Lewis Mudge and James Poling, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 74.

To understand what prophetic service is we must first understand what it means to be prophetic, in more detail than we have already explored. As already stated, to be prophetic there must be elements of both critique and hope (a reason why working across the theological spectrum of Friends would be helpful in this work). To be prophetic also implies that one is in a sense delivering a message or a truth that has been given by God. "The term *prophetic* indicates in a single word the basic theory of Quaker ministry," says Howard Brinton, "a ministry which waits until it becomes a vocal expression of the Divine Word spoken immediately in the heart."[77] Not only do we tend to privatize the religious values behind our actions, but there is also often conflict between those who are most focused on issues of justice and those who are most focused on spiritual and religious concerns, even within faith traditions, to say nothing of the conservative/liberal divide. People on both sides will argue that the one is primary, and give most of their time and energy towards it, creating a false and unhelpful dichotomy between action and contemplation.

As Quaker theologian and activist Daniel Snyder says, "there is a journey that some follow by starting in prayer and others follow by starting in action…However, it is sometimes the case that those who pray do not act, and those who act do not pray." [78] In order to engage in prophetic service, we must integrate prayer and action, and recognize both as one and the same. We cannot share of life itself at a deep level without engagement in the suffering and pain of the world, in the experience and everyday lives

[77] Howard Brinton, "Prophetic Ministry," Pendle Hill Pamphlet 54 (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 1950), 3, 5.
[78] Daniel Snyder, "Quaker Witness as Sacrament," Pendle Hill Pamphlet 397 (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 2008), 22.

of real people. Equally, our work for justice lacks depth and vision without a deeper grounding in the life of faith. Our prophetic service should speak to the reality of both of these aspects of our lives with God and in community with others.

I have been part of groups, both religious and secular, who claim to provide a witness as they engage in work for peace and justice. Quakers generally use the terms "service" and "witness" interchangeably. We often talk about our peace testimony or witness, yet it seems we often get caught up in our own ideas about this work rather than being faithful to the root of the witness. The Greek word for witness is the same as the word for martyr, and in the Bible, as elsewhere, it often has legal connotations. A witness is a person who bears witness to something, telling others the truth about what they have directly experienced. So an important question when considering a Christian witness, or in this case prophetic service, becomes, to whom or what are we witnessing? When our witness is to the real and deep belief in what Karl Barth terms the "righteousness of God," that is, the deep hope that God can and will make change and newness in the world, our work in the world takes on a prophetically hopeful quality and becomes sustainable for the long haul. [79] Hope is an essential quality of prophetic service. "Do we remember," asks Quaker Stephen Carey, who was a staff member of the American Friends Service Committee, "that it is the spirit of our service, the aura that surrounds it, the gentleness and the patience that marks it, the love made visible that compels it, that is

[79] Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978) 9. (I am in no way claiming that Barth would find resonance with my overall project, but I do find some of his ideas useful here.)

the truly distinctive quality that lifts Quaker service above lobbying, above pressure, above coercion, that inspires the doubtful, and reaches to the heart of the adversary?"[80]

In *Vision and Character*, Craig Dykstra discusses service as one of the primary Christian disciplines. He warns us against engaging in service with an aim to be effective because "where our sole aim is effectiveness, certain diabolical dynamics are set in motion."[81] If effectiveness is our goal, then it is inevitable that power dynamics come into play and it is likely that power will be abused. If our service is linked too closely with effectiveness, "we become the ones who must decide what effectiveness means… we must determine what the one in need will become when our service is accomplished…Rather than servants, we become manipulators…When this happens, the one in need has become ours. We have bought the sufferer."[82] This precise critique is one of the reasons that AFSC discontinued its work camp programs, as we have seen. It was felt by a substantial number of people that the work was paternalistic, that the primarily white, middle class, educated volunteers were coming in as "do-gooders" in areas of economic hardship, often "serving" people of color. This, in fact, is an assumption that some detractors have made about the proposed work of Quaker Voluntary Service. Margaret Miles lifts up another critique of the language of service which has to do with erroneous assumptions of a universal self that is engaged in service. Exhortations to "self-emptying" and "self-sacrificing" service can actually be unhealthy for those who have traditionally been in servant roles. Miles says that this language works "merely to

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[80] Stephen G. Cary: "The Quaker Proposition," *Friends Journal*, November 1979, 4.
[81] Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 100.
[82] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 100.

reinforce the social conditioning of those who are already thoroughly trained to attend to the needs of others at the expense of their own needs."[83] This critique of the language of service is one made today especially by womanist theologians like Jacquelyn Grant.[84]

Not only can service with the simple goal of effectiveness lead to the abuse of power, but it also ends up being a goal which is doomed to fail, especially when dealing with deeply entrenched issues, leading to further objectification of the sufferer. "If service must be effective, then when we can no longer be effective we no longer have any reason to be there with and for the sufferer," says Dykstra. "The sufferer, by becoming an occasion for our effective use of power, becomes an object with which we can dispense when our power is seen to be ineffective."[85] When we focus on effectiveness, we are essentially focused exclusively on our own powers; we objectify others, making them into mere instruments for our own purposes. We forget that we are partners not only with other people but also with God. A focus on effectiveness only, therefore, is not acting prophetically.

Yet, it is not that we should have no concern at all for the outcome of our efforts, or that our work should be unconnected to harsh reality. Prophetic service does not ask us to hope for something which has no basis in the realities of the work in which we are engaged. Being prophetic does not mean maintaining a hope that is totally ungrounded in reality, or believing that somehow God will come to our rescue no matter how much or how little we are working for the hoped for future. Paul Tillich offers a helpful balance to

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[83] Miles, *Practicing Christianity*, 121.
[84] See, for example, Jacquelyn Grant, "The Sin of Servanthood," in Emilie M. Townes, *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 199-21.
[85] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 101.

Barth on questions of human capacity, hope, despair, and the power of God. According to Tillich, we must actively participate in the transformation of the world, as partners with God, so that what we hope for is based on glimpses and glimmers of the reality we are engaged in creating already. He says,

> Where there is genuine hope, there that for which we hope already has some presence. In some way, the hoped for is at the same time here and not here. It is not yet fulfilled, and it may remain unfulfilled. But it is here, in the situation and in ourselves, as a power which drives those who hope into the future. There is a beginning here and now. And this beginning drives toward an end. The hope itself, if it is rooted in the reality of something already given, becomes a driving, power and makes fulfillment not certain, but possible… [T]here are many things and events in which we can see a reason for genuine hope, namely, the seed-like presence of that which is hoped for. In the seed of a tree, stem and leaves are already present, and this gives us the right to sow the seed in hope for the fruit. We have no assurance that it will develop. But our hope is genuine. There is a presence, a beginning of what is hoped for…We hope for the fulfillment of our work, often against hope, because it is already in us as vision and driving force. We hope for a lasting love, because we feel the power of this love present.[86]

When we move so far from actual relationship with the real people we want to serve that we are disconnected from the reality of both suffering and joy, whatever hope we may have had is no longer based in actual relationships and visible transformation. We do not trust in our ability to establish real relationships, we despair of the way things have been done in the past, and so we reject direct service as impossible.

Actions coming out of despair will never achieve the hoped for changes and when we act out of despair we will certainly not be able to enter into mutual relationships with those we serve. All too often, we fall into the despair and do not live into the hope; we offer much critique, but not as much assurance that there is reason to hope in spite of all

[86] Paul Tillich, "The Right to Hope," sermon delivered at Harvard's Memorial Church, March 1965, Reprinted in *Christian Century*, November 14, 1990, 1064-1067.

evidence to the contrary. "We are apprehensive of the righteousness of God," says Barth, "because we feel much too small and too human for anything different and new to begin in us and among us. This is our despair."[87] Despair is even more easily fallen into when we never interact directly with real people who are suffering but only with systems and institutions. We fail to see God's power as relational and in relationship with our efforts.

Again, relationships of mutuality and solidarity grounded in hope and trust in God are essential elements in prophetic service. An enduring hope in the ontological reality of justice and righteousness, Charles Mathewes says, is grounded in,

> …the affirmation of the fact that suffering is not the ultimate truth of the world even at present; that lies will finally, albeit eschatologically, be overcome by the truth; and that, even if these things do not today occur with anything like regularity—even if they occur infrequently enough to seem the exception that proves the rule—they are in fact the rule, the *regulus* of the world. What would it mean, what would it change, were we to inhabit that hope?[88]

Hope, according to Mathewes, is not about an ending point, but is rather always pointing towards the horizon, to that not yet imagined new thing that God will inevitably do, but that we cannot create or control. Mathewes says that part of hope's vocation is to help us resist the urge to control history. In its openness to newness, it also, perhaps ironically, promotes realistic visioning because it knows that the world is not supposed to be the way it is now. And, hope provokes action. "No one who is hopeful can resist participating in the hopeful world that has been disclosed to them," Mathewes says. [89] Real hope is always involvement and participation, and it changes our understanding of ourselves and

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[87] Barth, *Word of God and the Word of Man*, 17.
[88] Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 238.
[89] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life, 247.*

the world around us. It does not let us rest easy. Thus prophetic service points to the horizon, to the future that God makes possible, and asks for our participation in it. Through relationships of direct service, it creates the seeds of possibility that allow hope to continue to flourish. I believe we need the best of all of the Quaker traditions to fully realize and live into this prophetic service, full of hope and faith.

The necessary centrality of hope in the Christian life may at first glance seem obvious, and yet it is so rarely practiced in these terms. We may hope for things to be different, but that hope is rarely grounded in a real belief that change is actually possible. If left to our own devices, the hoped for changes—peace, economic justice, or whatever other seemingly impossible goal—are totally unattainable ends, the stuff of dreamers. The danger here is that we fall into despair, hopelessness and resignation. This kind of resignation leads easily to the "utopia of the status quo," according to Jürgen Moltmann, where we cannot dare to hope for anything different because all of our efforts have only led to bitter disappointment.[90] We all know cynical and jaded people like this, who though they may once have felt their own efforts would accomplish a larger change, have since been disappointed and are resigned to accept things as they are. In this rendering, we believe only in the cross, only in the reality of suffering and not in the truth of resurrection.

Or, on the other hand, we fall into a dangerous presumption, "a premature, self-willed anticipation of the fulfillment of what we hope for from God."[91] We put our own designs and definitions on what the results of our actions are to be, and when those

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[90] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 23.

[91] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope,* 23.

results elude us, we say we have failed, or that God has failed us. In my experience, this presumption does not necessarily lead to giving up the effort, but it does tend to define the terms of the struggle in a way that leaves no room for open-endedness, no space for new possibilities and promise. A posture of hope, on the other hand, allows for unbounded creativity and imagination in our engagement with the world, because it does not define success or change simply in worldly, quantifiable terms, or in terms of strategies that have proven to be "effective." The world, Moltmann says, "is full of all kinds of possibilities, namely, all the possibilities of the God of hope."[92] Thus creativity and imagination are also elements of prophetic service.

Those who have hope, says Moltmann, "can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it."[93] True faith, he helps us to understand, is both discontented with present reality and also believes in the promise of God's future. This is an important framing in the search for authentic Quaker prophetic service. Moltmann makes clear the need to always hold in tension the relationship between the cross and the resurrection, the real suffering of this world and the equally real promise of God's future. We can neither flee into escapism and ignore real social problems, nor can we rely totally on human efforts to realize change. "To believe," he says, "means to cross in hope and anticipation the bounds that have been penetrated by the raising of the crucified."[94] This kind of resurrection hope moves us away from the limitations of evangelical and liberal categories and closer to an authentic witness grounded in God's concern for suffering and promise of a new creation, for all life, both those "serving" and

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[92] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 26.
[93] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21.
[94] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope,* 21.

those being served. Put in less Christo-centric language, Ellen Ott Marshall similarly affirms the need for this kind of hope, grounded in a relational God who desires our action in the world, when she says, "this hope is an affirmation of human potential to resist suffering, to act compassionately toward one another, to labor toward the flourishing of creation, and to sustain one another through loss."[95] This is hope that is grounded in engagement with the realities of suffering and which works to change conditions, knowing that we are ultimately not alone and that God acts with us and through us.

So rather than effectiveness, our goal in hopeful prophetic service should be *presence*. This is, in fact, what the gospels teach us about service. "Service as presence means being with another…Christ's service to humankind was…his coming to be with us to take on our suffering as his own, to stand with us and to go through with us whatever it is we are going through."[96] Presence does not mean becoming the other person, presuming to completely understand his or her situation, or pretending to be someone you are not. But it means being present to and vulnerable with the other. "Presence demands equality and justice in the sense that it renounces the self-protection of power over the other."[97] Presence requires compassion and commitment. It is, in the words of Rufus Jones, giving and sharing of life itself. We are present with others not for a moment in time only, but for the long haul. Dykstra sums up his view of service by saying,

> Service, then, is a discipline of renouncing power in order to be present with others in vulnerability, equality and compassion. Ironically, such

[95] Ellen Ott Marshall, *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom: Toward a Responsible Theology of Christian Hope* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 81.
[96] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 101.
[97] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 102.

> service *does* help people. It is, in a kind of foolish way, effective. It repeatedly has the effect of providing space for other persons to tap their own resources and to gather their own energies…The one served is recognized as the person he or she is, and not made into an object.[98]

This, I would argue, is what Rufus Jones means by "prophetic service."

In a recent conversation with Daniel Snyder about this he said, "The antidote to paternalism is not *no* service. It is service alongside, with, allied."[99] Prophetic service does not try to obscure the realities of privilege, oppression, racism, classism, and all of the many other real challenges that face someone engaged in service, but rather confronts them openly, with integrity and humbleness, staying grounded in God's leading and guidance, constantly remaining accountable to those in the community of service and engagement. This is done with the knowledge that our actions, even with the best of intentions, will fall short. There will inevitably be issues of power and privilege in our relationships. But we nevertheless engage in these relationships of presence out of a sense of hopefulness and trust in God's presence and promise and with the desire to be transformed, even when that transformation is a painful process.

Snyder relates a story of a group of Quakers, some self-identified activists and some self-identified contemplatives. The activists in the group, he says, kept everyone focused on the "real and urgent needs of a broken world" while the contemplatives "challenged us to resist the temptation to carry the world's problems on our own shoulders."[100] The activists were challenged to ground their sense of urgency in prayer and reflection, while the contemplatives were challenged to act in the world rather than

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[98] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 103.
[99] Personal Interview with Daniel Snyder, March 6, 2011.
[100] Snyder, "Quaker Witness as Sacrament," 29.

remaining in inward reflection. The integration of both prayer and action allowed the group to understand what it meant to be hopeful:

> Together we began to discern the contours of hope, for although we yearn to see and to celebrate the visible results of our work, we dare not anchor hope in the visible, for we are working toward a future that may be many generations in the making, a future that we may not see in our lifetime, indeed a future that may never exist…Hope is the means, not the end. Hope is already visible in the faithfulness and courage that it takes to stand in a place of truth in spite of the world's seeming indifference to our efforts…One who learns to pray in the midst of these conditions, even in the face of death, begins to know an Infinite Grace that not only guides us in our work, but that also refreshes us in the midst of it.[101]

It is the combination and integration of prayer and action that makes for truly prophetic service. "Service depends on prayer…the kind of energy that flows through us when our own life forces are purified by attention to God."[102] And service also *affects* prayer. "In service…we realize…that all lives, not just our own, are established and sustained by a Power that lies outside of any of us. Through service, our attention is drawn increasingly to that Power and we find ourselves learning to pray in new and more obedient ways."[103] Prophetic service, then, is presence, humble prayer and action together, that we engage in with the expectation of transformation.

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[101] Snyder, "Quaker Witness as Sacrament," 29-30.
[102] Dykstra, *Vision and Character,* 105.
[103] Dykstra, *Vision and Character,* 105.

VI. Formation and Transformation: Prophetic Service as a Religious Practice

It should not be difficult to understand prophetic service as we have just discussed it as a vital religious practice. Experiences of direct and prophetic service have uniquely formed Quakers, primarily youth and young adults, in Quaker faith and practice, and ultimately into lives of service and transformation. Especially in a faith tradition with no formal creed, no outward sacraments, and such a huge diversity of belief, prophetic service plays (or has played and should play) an essential role in how our young people are formed into a faith identity and how they are oriented into lives committed to justice and peace, devotion to God and neighbor, and ultimately the Quaker way of life.

Traditionally, Christians have understood service as a spiritual discipline which is part of a person's formation in discipleship. To be a disciple is to be a follower of Christ, and it implies having "one's life formed by the strenuous discipline of going where he went, looking at things the way he did, trusting as he trusted, making ourselves vulnerable as he was vulnerable."[104] Though there are many liberal Quakers today who would not identify as Christians, I still believe that the fundamental disciplines are relevant to our lives and that following in the way of Jesus does not necessarily require claiming a Christian identity. Indeed, the board of Quaker Voluntary Service faithfully discerned "the Example of Jesus Christ" to be one of our core values as an organization, despite our desire to work across the branches of Quakerism which includes some non-

[104] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 90.

Christians. Clearly, prophetic service was at the core of Jesus' life and ministry, and it has been at the core of Quaker ministry from the beginning of the movement.

There is a distinction between language that tells and language that shows, says Quaker theologian Pink Dandelion. So even though Quakers, especially those who are liberal and unprogrammed, do not have a strong and coherent language which *tells* (i.e. no creeds, no doctrines) our theology is expressed in actions. Referencing Harvey Gillman, Dandelion says, "The Quaker search for Eden is a search for how to live, not what to believe. Quaker theology is about showing, not telling…Gillman claims that people convert to Quakerism because they've met a Quaker, that is, they've been shown in some way what a Quaker life might look like, not because they know what Quakerism is about."[105] Dandelion is critical of what he calls the (liberal) Quaker culture of silence. He argues that because of the primacy of silence in worship, there tends to also be silence in the rest of our lives. We do not create many good opportunities to talk about our beliefs and thus "noninvolvement can masquerade as piety in a group where sitting in silence is so highly valued."[106] And yet, for decades, service programs provided Quakers with an avenue to live out their faith, show through their actions what it meant to be a Quaker, and to engage in dialogue and reflection about their beliefs, even providing content for meditation and religious discovery during silent worship.

Religious faiths are like languages, Craig Dykstra argues in *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*.[107] Religious faith is communal and involves a

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[105] Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 95.
[106] Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, 104.
[107] Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

distinctive way of living together in community. Together, as a community, we engage in the socialization process and participate in identity-building activities. Young people, especially, are involved in a search for meaning in their lives. Young people are building their identities in the midst of conflict and competing truth claims, especially in the modern and postmodern world with its endless choices, as was in explored Chapter III. "A major task for adolescents," says Dykstra, "is to find, among the available alternatives, a way of life that they can make their own."[108] Religious practices are crucial to this exploration and formation. It is my conviction that fewer and fewer young Quakers will chose the Quaker way of life if there are not vital, engaging, and relevant practices in which they are engaged. We are taught to highly value justice and equality but we are not given the opportunities and tools to engage these values in a uniquely Quaker way, in community with other seeking young people. Understanding service as prophetic service and, further, as a religious practice with the ability to form and transform young Quakers would help us to properly value its role in our faith tradition.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, gives a complex definition of practice which helps us to understand the many dimensions of a practice. He says that a practice is,

> any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.[109]

This complex definition, when broken down, can help us to understand the way in which direct, prophetic service functioned for the Quaker community in the past and how it can

[108] Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith*, 121.
[109] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

function again. In reference to MacIntyre's definition, Dykstra says that "human moral progress is made by participation in practices."[110] In other words, our very conception of what is good and right is shaped and enhanced by our participation in practices, and especially those that have inherent moral content. There are both external and internal goods that can be attained by engaging in a practice, says MacIntyre.

An important distinction between external and internal goods is that the external goods can usually be achieved by alternative methods or other practices as well. The internal goods, however, are only produced by participation in that specific practice or one very like it. The internal goods "can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question."[111] In other words, if service is understood as a religious practice, then though the external goods may be accomplished in other ways, we lose the internal goods that service produces when we lose the practice of (prophetic) service. Part of the function of an internal good is the achievement of "the good of a certain kind of life."[112] This means that the internal goods produced by a practice are part of a larger, coherent tradition which involves a whole way of life. In this sense, participation in prophetic service is part of the whole Quaker way of life, of what it means concretely to be a Quaker, and to embody the Quaker concept of the good, which includes peacemaking, equality, integrity, and justice.

Taking MacIntyre's definition as a starting point, we can begin to understand how service engaged in by generations of Friends in the past did not only produce external goods (i.e. providing aid and assistance to war torn countries, feeding hungry people,

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[110] Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith*, 69.
[111] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 189.
[112] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.

digging ditches, helping build homes, and on and on) but it also produced internal goods, that is, the moral and spiritual formation and transformation of the volunteers themselves. Both the external and internal goods need to be understood and evaluated when we examine any religious practice. Perhaps we have erroneously assumed that only the external goods were important when analyzing Quaker service. It seems that in the past, some people determined that the external goods were no longer good, that is, that the charity model of service (examined in the previous section) was at play and was inappropriate. Part of MacIntyre's definition also has to do with standards of excellence. What is considered to be "excellent" must be understood historically. Something considered excellent at one time might not be at another. Thus, what may have been considered an excellent external good in the early days of the AFSC work camps and other initiatives of Quaker service are not necessarily goods that we would today consider to be excellent.

Clearly, we must ask, what is our conception of the good and what standards of excellence are we trying to promote? Our conception of the (external) good seems to have grown and evolved, deepening in solidarity and systemic analysis, moving from addressing the results of injustice to addressing the root causes of that injustice. And yet, we must also analyze the internal goods produced by the practice of service. If the internal goods (moral and spiritual transformation towards justice, compassion, and solidarity) are still seen as good and excellent, then what happens to our faith community when we discontinue the religious practice that produced those goods, especially if MacIntyre is correct in claiming that only that specific practice can produce that set of internal goods?

Moral growth, Dykstra argues, involves the "apprehension of mystery," which can only take place when we put aside our own self-interest and remove ourselves from the center of our attention. "To move out of the center requires a transformation of our imaginations," he says. "This is accomplished…through revelation."[113] Though this process is a gift of grace, this does not mean that we do not have responsibility for it. It requires disciplines. Discipline, though a classic religious value, has been largely obscured in our meetings and churches. We have stressed independence and autonomy which often leads to not wanting to take guidance from others. Remember the discussion of religion in the postmodern world and this assertion rings very true. In the marketplace of religion, we tend to act and think in individualistic terms. Recall one assessment that the work camp programs fell apart because of the entitlement and individualism of the young volunteers in the 1960's. This is especially the case for Quakers who have always practiced a flat hierarchy and who are loathe to recognize anyone as having more authority than another.

Engaging in a practice cannot be done according to an individual's preference but rather involves maintaining certain rules and standards. "To enter into a practice," says MacIntyre, "is to accept the authority of those standards…It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice. Practices of course…have a history… Thus the standards are not themselves immune from criticism, but nonetheless we cannot be initiated into a practice without accepting the authority of the best standards realized so far."[114] This means, if

[113] Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 89.
[114] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.

Quakers are to reclaim the practice of prophetic service, it must be done with a clear sense of the history of Quaker service, the standards and boundaries that this practice has maintained in the past, what was learned from it, and where we now stand in relation to the tradition. For example, we chose to incorporate the term "voluntary" into the name of Quaker Voluntary Service not because we want to promote "volunteering" as may have been understood in the past, but rather because this term honors our past tradition of service and also links us to similar organizations of other faith traditions. Both connections are important to us. Honoring tradition and connecting to the past does not, however, mean that we must engage in service in exactly the way that it used to be done, in fact to do so would be a violation of the very creativity and generativity inherent in practices. So practices must change and grow and remain open to new revelation while also staying grounded in their tradition and past. "To enter into a practice is to enter into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have preceded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point."[115]

Dykstra sums up practices by saying that they are "those cooperative human activities through which we, as individuals and communities, grow and develop in moral character and substance…they are ways of doing things together in which and through which human life is given direction, meaning and significance, and through which our very capacities to do good things well are increased."[116] There is much anecdotal evidence in the Quaker community of how the work camps run by AFSC, Philadelphia

[115] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
[116] Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith*, 69-70.

Yearly Meeting and others functioned as a religious practice as outlined here. In fact, the generations that participated in the work camps speak of the experiences with great tenderness and respect, and there is a kind of mythical quality imbued in these rememberings. "In order to participate in a practice intelligently, one must become aware of the history of the practice,"[117] says Dykstra. There are vast resources in the AFSC archives that would allow a researcher to begin to develop a sense of what the impact of the work camp programs was, both internally and externally. Though that research is beyond the scope of this particular investigation, a few stories can illustrate the much bigger picture.

Paul Lacey, who was mentioned previously, spoke with me about the role of service in his own life. Lacey came to Quakers through a Philadelphia Yearly Meeting work camp when he was in high school. He describes it as working in a "tough" neighborhood. "It was an extraordinary experience," he says. "It was the first time in my life that I was aware that there were people who were religious and did service out of a religious conviction." The culmination of the weekend work camp was to go to a Quaker meeting for worship. He describes the experience as a powerful end to the weekend of work. "When I went to school on Monday I said to my closest friends, 'I am going to become a Quaker.' I did not know what that really meant. But here were people who were religious, who were doing the work they did because this was the right way to

[117] Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice" in Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds. *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 44.

express one's faith…The faith came as a result of getting my hands dirty first and then wondering why are people doing this."[118]

David Ritchie, the main organizer of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting work camp program and himself an early participant in the AFSC work camps, had a huge influence on Lacey and many others. Lacey reports that Ritchie would close the weekend work camps by reminding the participants that they were by no means solving the problem. Ritchie's insight, Lacey says, was that "at best we were earning the right to study the problem. That has always stayed with me as an extraordinarily insightful comment about service…Even if you are successfully rebuilding a town or city in Europe you are doing something very important but you are not solving everything, so one of the important considerations is to have a substantial sense of humility about what can be done, what you are called to do."[119]

This comment points also to the norming aspect of practices. It is not simply that practices shape and form the practitioners, but also that there is a corrective element inherent in practices. Lacey learned from his experiences of the need for humility, the deep complexities present in any social issue, and the inability to solve a problem purely with human efforts. This may have been a lesson inherent in the acts of service in which they were engaged, but it was also something explicitly taught by the work camp leader. The participants were given the opportunity to intentionally reflect on the experiences and their meanings, and given guidance in that reflection. In all of the faith based voluntary service programs active today (Mennonite Voluntary Service, Brethren

[118] Personal interview with Paul Lacey, January 13, 2011.
[119] Interview with Lacey, January 2011.

Volunteer Corps, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Lutheran Volunteer Corps and the like), there is an intentional component of reflection and guidance. Though some emphasize this more than others, the element of reflecting on learning and extracting certain meaning from the experience of service is key to all.

In the 1952 study referenced previously, *The Volunteer Work Camp: A Psychological Evaluation,* Henry Riecken evaluates domestic voluntary work camp programs run by the American Friends Service Committee in 1948, focusing on the effects of these programs on the volunteers themselves. He engages in surveys and studies of the volunteers just before their terms of service begin, just after they end, and then he follows up with them ten months later to see what lasting impacts the experience may have had on them. At the time of the publication of this book in 1952, AFSC had already been engaged in work camp programs for nearly 20 years. In the forward, we learn that approximately 1900 young people had participated in domestic work camp programs and over 500 had participated in international projects up to that date.[120] Considering that the work camp programs lasted at least another decade following the publication of this evaluation, it is safe to assume that many more young Quakers (and others) were involved.

There were several implicit goals of the work camp programs which were evaluated in this study. Riecken notes the fluidity in the articulation of goals among AFSC program staff and says it was impossible to collect a clear list that all could agree on. However, among the goals he gleans from various program materials are included "to reduce the amount of prejudice expressed toward racial, religious, and national minority

[120] Riecken, *Volunteer Work Camp*, xiv.

groups, to increase the strength in the belief in democratic group procedures, to reduce the extent of agreement with authoritarianism, to increase the extent of agreement with the nonviolent position toward war and other social conflicts, and to alter the choice of life work in the direction of service-oriented vocation."[121] There were other issues having to do with improving maturity, increasing one's sense of inner peace, and moving participants towards more liberal political tendencies. In general, the study claims that the work camps were most successful in decreasing prejudice towards others, strengthening belief in the democratic process and producing or confirming a lifetime commitment to service. Democratic process here refers as well to Quaker decision making process which uses a consensus model but is decidedly religious in grounding. There are many factors which were taken into account, including what participants were already predisposed towards due to their backgrounds. However, those general findings based on interviews with participants and direct observations corroborate the anecdotal evidence that I have heard from many Friends, including Paul Lacey, who participated in these programs. Though nowhere is there an explicitly stated goal of recruiting participants into the Quaker faith, this seems to have happened for many people. So, it is clear from this brief and limited look at the personal impact of Quaker service programs on the participants that they did shape and form their identities not only as Quakers, or into becoming Quakers, but their whole outlook on life.

I believe that now is the time for Quakers to reclaim and reinvent our tradition of prophetic service and to understand it as a formative religious practice. I am convinced that if we are to do this, we must provide opportunities for young people to engage in this

[121] Riecken, *Volunteer Work Camp*, 149-151.

practice with structure and guidance. In other words, I think there must be some institutional element to our practice of prophetic service. MacIntyre warns against confusing institutions and practices. He says that institutions are more concerned with what he calls external goods, and that they must be so in order to sustain themselves and indeed to sustain "the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions."[122] The effort to create Quaker Voluntary Service is an attempt to create an institution which can sustain the practice of prophetic service.

MacIntyre also warns that the creativity and genius of the practice are always at risk of being obscured by the competitiveness of the institution. This delicate balance—on the one hand needing an institution to sustain a practice and on the other needing to protect the practice from the institution—is a tension we have confronted in the creation of Quaker Voluntary Service. It is a tension we keep close to our hearts as we engage in this work. The effort to create Quaker Voluntary Service has from the start felt like a very clear leading for me. Part of the way we manage the tension between practice and institution is to always keep our work grounded in prayer and corporate discernment. By incorporating what we value in the practice itself—religious grounding, Quaker process, presence—into the operation of the organization, we hope the tension will be generative rather than destructive. The pursuit of goods engaged in through a practice, MacIntyre affirms, "extends through generations, sometimes through many generations."[123] Quakers have a rich and powerful tradition of prophetic service as a religious practice. Our sense

[122] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
[123] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

of tradition "manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present."[124] To take up this practice once again is to both honor those who generated the practice as well as those who will continue to refine it in the future.

Though I will not be able to explore its fuller implications here, I would like to suggest that not only is prophetic service best understood as a religious practice, but that it indeed plays a sacramental function in the Quaker tradition which practices no formal outward sacraments. I only want to hint at this idea as an area for future exploration. Rufus Jones says that the meaning of sacrament is "a spiritual reality breaking through a material medium."[125] In his view, the whole universe is sacramental. Our goal as human beings is to become "rightly fashioned," in other words formed and shaped in the same sense that we have been speaking about the function of a religious practice. When we are rightly fashioned beings, "the universe shows itself to be in some real sense a sacramental universe" because it allows great spiritual realities to break through in physical manifestations.[126]

Daniel Snyder claims that the sacramental life is "a life so grounded in inward Presence that its outward dimensions are a transparent witness to Spirit."[127] Quakers have always claimed that outward sacraments are unnecessary because of the ongoing and inward reality of grace and communion with God. Snyder says that Quaker witness (or service) "is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible Grace. This is the

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[124] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 223.
[125] Rufus Jones, *Spirit in Man*, (Berkeley: Peacock Press, 1963), 33.
[126] Jones, R, *Spirit in Man*, 32-33.
[127] Snyder, "Quaker Witness as Sacrament," 4.

classic definition of a sacrament…To live sacramentally is to fall so completely into God's infinite Love for us and for the world that we come to see, to know and to act in the world in light of this Love."[128] In a personal conversation, Snyder told me that through direct encounter and relationship with persons with different life experiences, he sees grace breaking through in the world moment by moment. "If you do not show up for the heartbreak," he says, "you miss the grace. You have to show up for the human condition in order to have the grace."[129] This means embodied, person to person relationships. He talks about the need to be broken open in order to experience God's grace, which is sacramental. "The Holy One is working on me to break me open," he says. "And we all need to look for ways to be broken."[130] This breaking open is similar to Jones' concept of spiritual realities breaking through into our lives. What was previously meaningless is made meaningful in the "sacrament of meaning."[131] Echoing what was explored in the section on prophetic service, Jones confirms the belief that the sacramental universe is a moral universe. The universe, he says, "backs man's wisest moral insights—and defeats evil."[132] Our highest calling, then, is to "become sacramental organs of this Love which is of God."[133] This, ultimately, is the purpose of prophetic service as a religious practice. When understood in this way, we are freed to creatively engage in a practice with a long and vital tradition, knowing that it has power to form and shape lives and to usher in the grace of God.

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[128] Snyder, "Quaker Witness as Sacrament," 30-31.
[129] Personal Interview with Daniel Snyder, March 6, 2011.
[130] Interview with Snyder, March 2011.
[131] Jones, R. *Spirit in Man*, 34.
[132] Jones, R. *Spirit in Man*, 39.
[133] Jones, R. *Spirit in Man*, 45.

VII. Conclusion: Moving Forward in Prophetic Service

In a time of perpetual war, violence, unprecedented greed, and the destruction of the earth, the Religious Society of Friends is called to live into its radical roots and once again be a prophetic voice for peace and justice. I believe the Religious Society of Friends today is called to re-enliven our prophetic tradition of service, recognizing its power to shape and transform lives. This would help us to anchor ourselves once again, and to be an authentic voice in the world that is compelling, relevant, and urgent for people of all ages and backgrounds. As we have seen, this will necessarily involve engaging with Friends across the wide spectrum of tradition and belief, nurturing and supporting our young people, examining our power and privilege within the Religious Society of Friends and in our larger society, and reclaiming and reinventing the formative practice of prophetic service.

Quaker Voluntary Service is an effort which aims to be a space where Quakers from all branches of our fragmented family tree might come together, fully and authentically, to engage together in a vital and formative religious practice. I have no illusions that this will be an easy process or that everyone will embrace our efforts. In our attempts to work across the branches of Quakerism, inevitably there will be those for whom we are too Christian, others for whom we are not Christian enough. Many will say that trying to work cross-branch is too difficult and will condemn our efforts to failure. In our efforts to embody prophetic service as authentic, mutual presence, there will be those who critique the work as another example of the charity model of service, or will

see it as a project which is aimed at privileged white people to the detriment of others. Some Friends from the 1960's youth generation will not understand the desire on the part of younger Quakers to be religiously grounded in our work for peace and justice. In our effort to reclaim and reinvent a practice from our past tradition, there are those who will say that this effort has been attempted before and because it failed then, it will fail again.

And yet I believe that without reaching into the deep and vital roots of our tradition, where prophetic service is at the core, we will never achieve more unity across the branches, or more inclusive diversity, or more prophetic witness for peace, justice, and God's transforming love. It will not be easy, and we will not do it perfectly. Yet prophetic service is a religious practice that has the power to form and transform the lives of all involved. As Rufus Jones reminds us, "its way is deeply sacrificial and costly. It gives and shares, not merely goods and money, but life itself."[134] In a recent email, Noah Baker Merrill, a young adult Friend and QVS board member, reflected on the nature of Quaker Voluntary Service saying,

> To me, QVS is not just a "service" program. It's about the present and the future of Quakerism, of how we can be taught together and teach one another in community through worship that is service and service that is worship…We need to know who we are and whose we are in a way that has more integrity and authenticity. This will help us and require us to reach across divisions and welcome more of God's children into a recognition of our mutual life in God. And then we may be more useful to the Life at work in our blessed and broken world.[135]

I believe we are called to witness to the hope and possibility of a different world, to be the organs through which divine love speaks, with humbleness and humility and joy and

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[134] Rufus M. Jones, "The Spiritual Message of the Religious Society of Friends," World Conference Report of Commission I, 1937, 7-16.

[135] Personal Email, March 8, 2011

celebration. May we continue to be faithful to this leading that is the creation of Quaker Voluntary Service and to the deeper call upon our lives to be vessels of divine love in a broken world, creating opportunities to form ourselves through the vital practice of prophetic service, embodying hope and commitment, and remaining open and responsive to transformation.

Appendix A

Epistle

From the Quaker Volunteer Service Consultation

Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA

12th to 15th of Second Month 2009

To Friends Everywhere:

> *. . . and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6: 8)

We came together, led by our young adult Friends calling us to live the Truth of the prophet Micah's words. The thirty-six participants, facilitators, elders and one very young Friend invited to this consultation, co-sponsored by Friends General Conference Youth Ministries Committee and Pendle Hill Quaker Retreat Center, came sharing a common purpose—to live into the possibility that through the volunteer projects to which we are connected individually the unique gifts of Quakerism can and will be made visible in the world.

The young adult Friends who carried these concerns individually and collectively for some years faithfully created a space for Spirit-led discernment for all of us as we considered our inspiration, our hopes and our challenges. With the assistance of the gathering committee's attentive and intentional preparation, we experienced expectant listening, support, accountability, love and ministry between and among us. Three elders grounded our four days of meetings for worship with attention to Quaker Volunteer Service.

> *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* (1st Corinthians 12: 4-7)

Friends of many ages came together in response to a call from our young adult Friends, each as an individual pool of Light, isolated in our communities and projects. Through sharing joyfully our gifts of song, play, laughter, conversation and worship we allowed the Love of Christ to connect our individual pools of Light into a blessed, illuminated, loving community. Out of both large and small group sharing we came to know and name the truth of our condition in the following ways:

- We hunger to reclaim the power and vitality of our faith.
- We seek to be authentically Quaker and to let our lives honestly preach the Truth of our faith and practice.
- We heard the Spirit behind the spoken words saying, "Christ is Sufficient."
- We realize the necessity of being faithful to yield to the work that is given us, no matter how small.
- We value the transformational service opportunities of our diverse projects and acknowledge that the transformation is the work of the Spirit and not of the project.
- We trust the experience of those who know that the fruits of our labors may come in a form and at a time over which we have neither control nor knowledge.
- We ask: Are Friends able both individually and collectively to expand sufficiently to embrace all which God offers us to place on our table?
- We celebrate the deep grounding and dynamic energy experienced through the Youth gathering here and across the Religious Society of Friends, calling us to our roots.
- We deeply understand the critical importance to the Religious Society of Friends now and in the future of these volunteer service projects specifically for Quakers which allow us to live honestly our faith through our service.
- We dwell in the possibility that the relationships made during this Consultation will not only enable our current projects to succeed but will also encourage our diverse visions to become reality.
- We unite in desire and a need for a national network of communication to connect Quaker Volunteer Service projects and struggle to know how to move forward and be open to continuing dialogue.
- We are mindful that those gathered here for this Consultation do not represent the fullness of the Religious Society of Friends and desire to reach across all branches of the Religious Society of Friends, beginning conversations and extending invitations to future consultations in whatever way they are realized.

The Spirit fed us through wind and song and in so many other ways during our time together. We came to know experientially the Truth of David's words in Psalm 32: 8:

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

During our evening session on Seventh Day, the Lord's eye was upon us and we were both instructed and counseled as messages arose out of deep worship calling us to account and lifting up the responsibility we carry to continue what has begun over these days together. We were cautioned not to allow confusion and discomfort to distract us from the Light. We leave here knowing the intertwining of our lives as we accompany one another in Spirit until we are together again as an expanded body.

On First Day morning we entered a process of witness and accountability one to another as we publically named and claimed our gifts, our conflicts, our commitments to God and to this body of Friends. Tenderly, we listened with the ears of our hearts as the baptismal power of Spirit flowed, gently anointing us with the balm of Gilead.

This epistle attempts to capture the words spoken during this consultation. The True and Necessary Epistle that will go forth is the one written on the hearts of each of the participants. It is the experience of this Living Epistle we carry out into the world, informing our work as we move forward in a way that is open to Spirit continuing to move in and through us—right here, right now.

On behalf of the body gathered,

Christina Repoley, Emma Churchman, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Zachary Moon

(Conveners for Quaker Volunteer Service Consultation)

Appendix B

Quaker Voluntary Service Vision, Mission, Values

Vision Statement

Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS) fosters dynamic relationships of service, witness, and worship in a living Quaker faith. In a world oppressed by the powers of violence, domination, exclusion and fear, QVS empowers transformative partnerships in the work of liberation and justice. We seek to be a vessel for the renewal and transformation of relationships with God and with one another. We are called to wrestle, labor, and delight in our blessed diversity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mission Statement

Quaker Voluntary Service equips the work and witness of Friends by providing support to a network of Quaker service communities. We support this network by providing centralized access to information about projects, and we assist in the creation and distribution of resources for program development and vocational discernment. We assist with recruitment of potential volunteers and outreach to service partners, help with fundraising and organizational development, and support the creation of new service houses and other service opportunities.

Values Statement

Quaker Faithfulness: QVS is deeply committed to Quaker practice, process and belief. QVS communities are committed to participating in worship together and with Quaker Meetings and Churches. We are committed to the Quaker understanding of the continuing revelation of God, and we expect to be opened to new understandings and new discoveries in our journey together. We celebrate the invitation of our living tradition including the historic testimonies of simplicity, peace, community, equality, and integrity; and the legacy of resistance to injustice through nonviolent witness. With God's guidance, the work of QVS will explore and enact new embodiments of these traditional values and experiences.

The example of Jesus Christ: Quaker traditions understand and experience the significance of Jesus Christ differently. QVS affirms that our call and work are modeled on the ministry of Jesus, including the teaching from Matthew 25:35-36, "for I was

hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Service: Through the QVS experience, we seek to create and sustain a culture of service within the broader Quaker community and foster a lifetime of service for volunteers who learn the joy of giving of themselves for the good of the world and the glory of God. We strive to serve in contextually appropriate ways that affirm the dignity of all persons and the sovereignty of all communities. We will practice solidarity rooted in mutually empowering relationships.

Community: QVS fosters communities that demonstrate radical hospitality that embraces the interdependence of all life. QVS communities will strive to embody the knowledge that each of us is both host and stranger, deeply living the truth that there is that of God in all life. We understand our spiritual journeys to be communal, not individualistic, and so volunteers will look to their community partners, other volunteers and mentors for guidance and accountability.

Transformation: The experience of service in community comes with the hope and expectation for changed and changing lives. Undoubtedly, the greatest change will occur in the lives of volunteers who come into a greater awareness of the movement of Divine Love and the way Spirit seeks to use us in the redemption and restoration of all things. Intentional work in the area of service learning and spiritual formation will animate the transformation of our minds, hearts and souls as we work toward a more just world and help us in discerning our particular gifts of ministry.

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