



# Gifts & Leadings Among Friends

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting  
Advancement and Outreach Series

Presented by Bill Warters (Birmingham Friends Meeting)

# Special Gifts Have Long Been Recognized

- ❖ The Apostle Paul frequently writes about the importance of embracing a range of gifts including **preaching, teaching, prophecy, healing, discerning, and ecstatic utterance**. In keeping with a wider view, Friends increasingly use the word **ministry** to describe a variety of gifts that members offer our faith community and the world around us, including **faith-led social witness, chaplaincy, religious education, spiritual formation, and healing work**. - *Inward Light website*

# Gifts from the Spirit

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;  
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;  
and there are varieties of activities, but *it is the same God who activates all of them* in every one.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

— New Testament (NRSV): 1 Corinthians 12:4



# Sharing Your Gifts in a Community

“Living out our gifts is part of building a stronger faith community. We believe that the first step is recognizing what our gifts are, and claiming them in the presence of a community.”

- Johanna Jackson



Red Cedar's Mini-Pantry requires gifts of organization, compassion and persistence

# Shared Spiritual Gifts

What are some examples  
Friends see in their Meetings  
or Communities?



# Spiritual Gift “Baskets”

- ❖ **Wisdom and discernment:** seeing the deeper spiritual dynamics in situations, helping a meeting sense when a decision has Life in it, or recognizing when something is off spiritually.
- ❖ **Teaching and shepherding:** explaining faith in clear, accessible ways; accompanying people over time; tending the spiritual health of a group.
- ❖ **Service and hospitality:** showing love through practical tasks, creating welcoming spaces, noticing and including those on the margins.
- ❖ **Encouragement and mercy:** sensing suffering quickly, offering comfort, and strengthening the discouraged so they can continue in faithfulness.
- ❖ **Administration and leadership:** organizing groups, seeing how different people and tasks fit together, clerking or facilitating meetings so that Spirit-led work can happen.
- ❖ **Prophecy and truth-telling:** perceiving and speaking needed truths—about injustice, hypocrisy, or needed change—under a tender concern rather than anger or self-importance.
- ❖ **Prayer and intercession:** being drawn to sustained, focused prayer for particular people, communities, or concerns, often quietly and over long periods.
- ❖ **Healing and reconciliation:** contributing to physical, emotional, or relational healing, sometimes through listening, presence, or prayer for wholeness.

# The Practice of Recording Gifts in the Ministry

- ❖ In the past, many Friends Meetings had a practice of formally recognizing certain Friends as gifted ministers
- ❖ The practice has diminished and reasons exist on both the pro and con side regarding this formal step
- ❖ A selection on the Practice of Recording Gifts in the Ministry from a Maine Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Counsel Committee report nicely lays out the issues (see handout...)

LEADINGS

# What is a Leading?

In the experience and understanding of Friends, **a leading has these dimensions:**

- ❖ Recognition of need, injustice, or other work to be done;
- ❖ An inward, caring response to the need, injustice, or work to be done;
- ❖ A sense that one is somehow being asked to take action to meet the need, correct the injustice, and/or do the necessary work;
- ❖ A belief that one's sense of "being asked to take action" arises not merely from one's small self, but from a larger Source — God, Christ, Spirit, the Numinous, the Real, the Unconscious

— from earlier edition of Faith and Practice of PYM, pp. 59-62 (now see p 15)

# The Experience of Being Led

**A genuine leading may announce itself** through overheard conversation that speaks directly to one's heart [see Gregg Levoy, *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life* p. 6.]; it may arise as a persistent dream, preoccupation or concern that one cannot shake off; it may become clear through painful realization that one's beliefs and actions are not congruent. Awareness of a leading may unfold slowly over time, as one's heart opens more fully to Truth. It may be work that is begun reluctantly — perhaps assigned by a nominating committee — yet grows into a labor of love.



# Nudged by the Spirit: Stories of People Responding to the Still, Small Voice of God

## Examples of Leadings and Discernment

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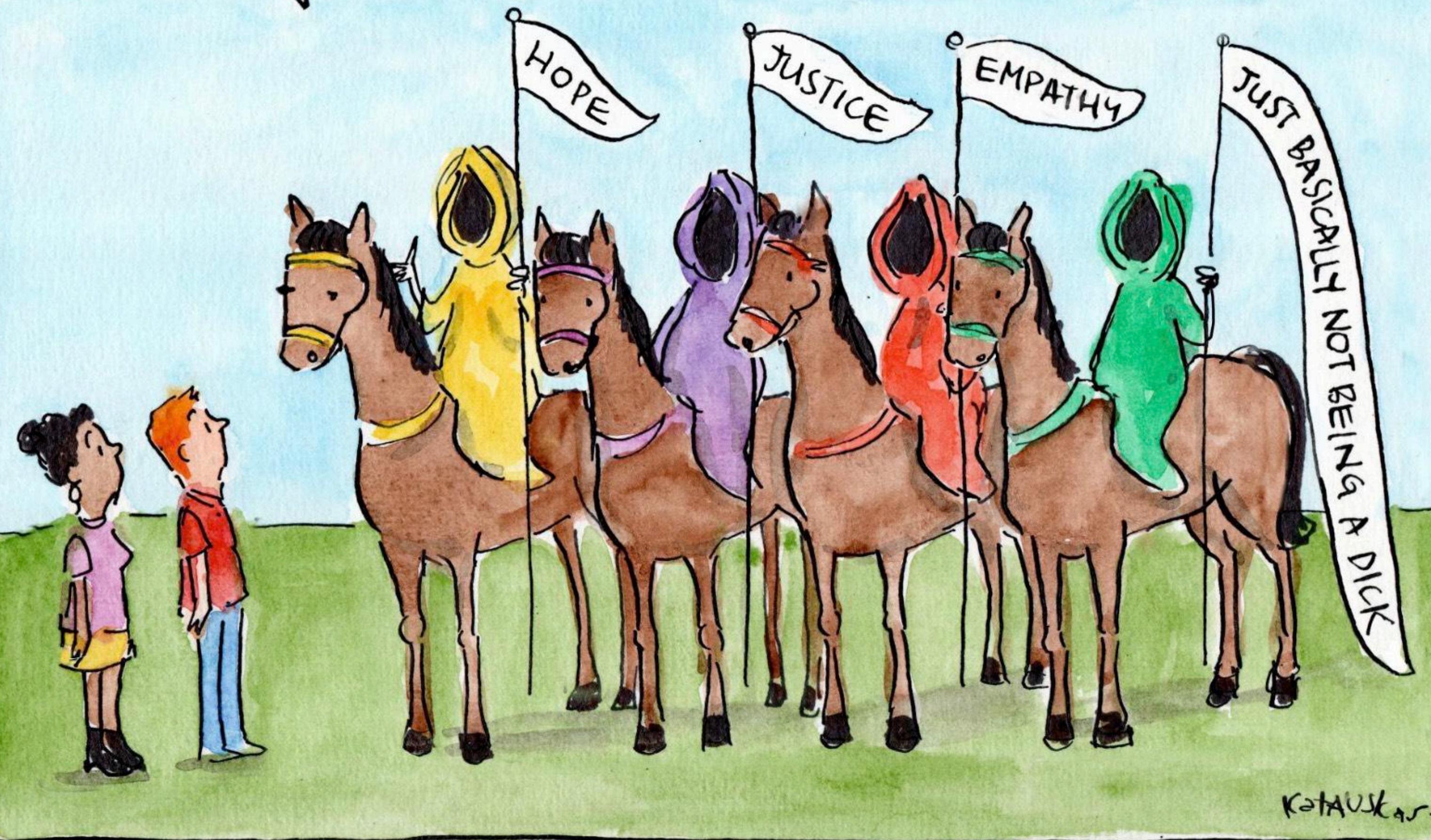
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What are Some Examples of  
Followed Leadings from  
within Our LEYM  
Community?

# A bit of Humor

THE WHOLE Apocalypse thing got a bit too DEPRESSING so we've REINVENTED OURSELVES as THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF WORKING TOGETHER to get us all out of the MESS that we're in...



# Practicing Discernment



# PYM Faith and Practice

**Individual Discernment:** Friends practice discernment in their individual lives, prayerfully seeking divine guidance in daily activities. They may also seek the meeting's support in finding clearness when considering a change in life direction or proposing an action to follow a leading. The act of seeking God's guidance is assisted by the meeting to assure that what is sensed by one is tested and affirmed by the worshipping community. (p. 16)

# As Way Opens...

## PILGRIMS ARE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The concept of as way opens takes a different tack from either Ignatius or Warren. Instead of focusing on four-week spiritual exercises or forty-day programs, as way opens points us to the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is our sacred compass; its role is to show us our way. Jesus said:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

This Gospel passage reminds us that God is with us on our pilgrimage—the indwelling Paraclete (a Greek word that is sometimes translated as “counselor”) accompanies us. God gives us the Paraclete to guide us into God’s truth. The Holy Spirit fulfills Christ’s promise that God will be with us forever as it works in our souls, teaching and guiding us. As way opens is about learning to pay attention to this Inner Teacher, our sacred compass. When we do so, we see God’s direction for our questions big and small, immediate and lifelong. We sense, through the work of the Paraclete, that God is always present

with us, guiding and directing our lives. We witness the work of our personal sacred compass.

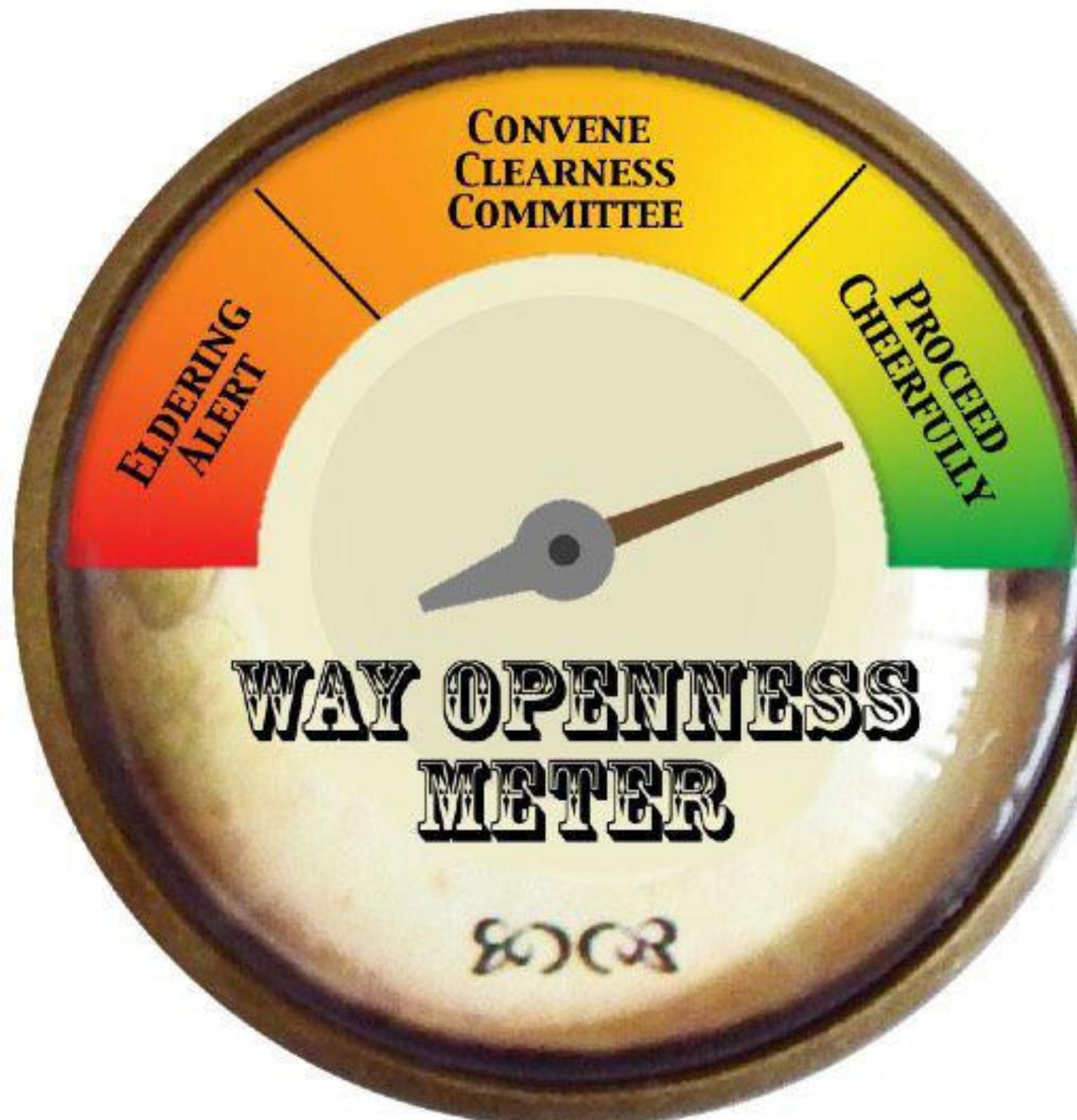
The early Friends believed that the Inner Teacher spoke with a quiet voice heard in the soul, so they worshiped in silence. They sought souls still enough to hear the God who speaks in sacred silence. They weren’t the first to hear God’s voice in soulful stillness. After God directed the prophet Elijah to go stand on a mountain, he discovered that God was not in the earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the sound of “sheer silence”:

“Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

God’s voice is at times so deep and so holy that it may appear to be nothing but silence—unless, like Elijah, we pay heartfelt attention. Can you think of a time when you heard God in the stillness of your soul? How did you get to that place of quietness and listening? When we quiet our soul’s busy-ness,

# Navigating Anew (Steampunk Quaker style)

This was a imaginary gauge to check on the appropriateness of a particular leading created for the Quaker Fair at LEYM 2023 Annual Meeting



If only we  
had one of  
these!





# Guidance for Meeting

## Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings

# Example from Illinois Yearly Meeting Guidance (see handout)

- ❖ In Quaker parlance, a “gift” is a God-given ability that is intended to be used for spiritual purposes, while a “leading” is a call to action based on a Friend’s sense that God has led her or him to take on a particular cause, for example pastoral counseling or chaplaincy in a prison or hospital. Such leadings typically emerge as a result of prayerful consideration of a concern, and they often reflect the gifts of the person who is led to act on them.

# Preparing for Discernment of Gifts and Leadings

- ❖ It can be helpful for monthly meetings to prepare themselves for requests involving leadings and ministries. In part this involves simply being aware that such requests may occur, and that they may reflect God's will concerning various members of the meeting community. However, the meeting might also wish to consider how it might handle requests of this kind before they come about.
- ❖ In some cases, a gift or leading may call for special recognition and/or support from a Friend's home meeting.

# Sample Clearness Committee Questions

- ❖ What is the nature of the leading?
- ❖ What gifts are necessary to follow the leading?
- ❖ Is this the right time for you to follow the leading?
- ❖ Are there aspects of the leading that you are still seeking to clarify, and for which the meeting can offer assistance?
- ❖ What challenges do you expect to face? How can the meeting help you handle those challenges?
- ❖ If the meeting provides you with formal recognition, will that help to advance the leading? How so?
- ❖ How will following the leading affect your spiritual journey? How might it deepen the spiritual life of the meeting community?
- ❖ How will following the leading affect your other responsibilities, including your responsibilities to the meeting?
- ❖ What kind of spiritual and practical support will you need in order to follow the leading? How much of that support do you expect the meeting to provide?

# Travel Minutes, Letters of Endorsement, and Letters of Introduction

- ❖ Under special circumstances which are often related to spiritual gifts and leadings, a monthly meeting may see fit to issue a letter to an individual Friend. The various types of letters are indicated and explained below (see handout)

# Phrases heard among Friends...

“That Friend is Outrunning Their Guide”

“They are testing a leading”

“We learn truth experientially”

“An Experiment with Truth”

“That Friend is Well Used”

“More seasoning is required”

“Don’t hide your light under a bushel”

# Quick Spiritual Gifts Inventory Activity

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS INVENTORY

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer honestly about how you usually are, not how you think you “should” be.

Circle one number for each statement: 0 = Rarely true of me 1 = Sometimes true 2 = Often true 3 = Very true

1. People look to me for calm guidance when a group is tense or confused. 0 1 2 3
2. I enjoy explaining spiritual or moral ideas in ways others can easily understand. 0 1 2 3
3. I notice who feels left out and try to include them. 0 1 2 3
4. I am drawn to pray regularly for people or situations. 0 1 2 3
5. I like organizing details so that a group can follow through on decisions. 0 1 2 3
6. I naturally encourage people who are discouraged or unsure of themselves. 0 1 2 3
7. I feel a strong concern for justice or truth and sometimes feel compelled to speak up. 0 1 2 3
8. I enjoy offering practical help (meals, rides, chores, small tasks) to others. 0 1 2 3
9. I find joy in giving money or resources to support people or ministries. 0 1 2 3
10. I enjoy listening to others about their spiritual lives and asking questions that help them go deeper. 0 1 2 3
11. I often see how different people and their abilities could fit together to get something done. 0 1 2 3
12. In worship or group settings, I sometimes sense a nudge to share a brief message or reflection. 0 1 2 3

**Scoring:** Write your scores (0–3) from each item into the lines below, then total each row.

**Encouragement & Mercy** Item 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 6: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 8: \_\_\_\_\_ *Total Encouragement & Mercy:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Teaching & Insight** Item 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 10: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 12: \_\_\_\_\_ *Total Teaching & Insight:* \_\_\_\_\_

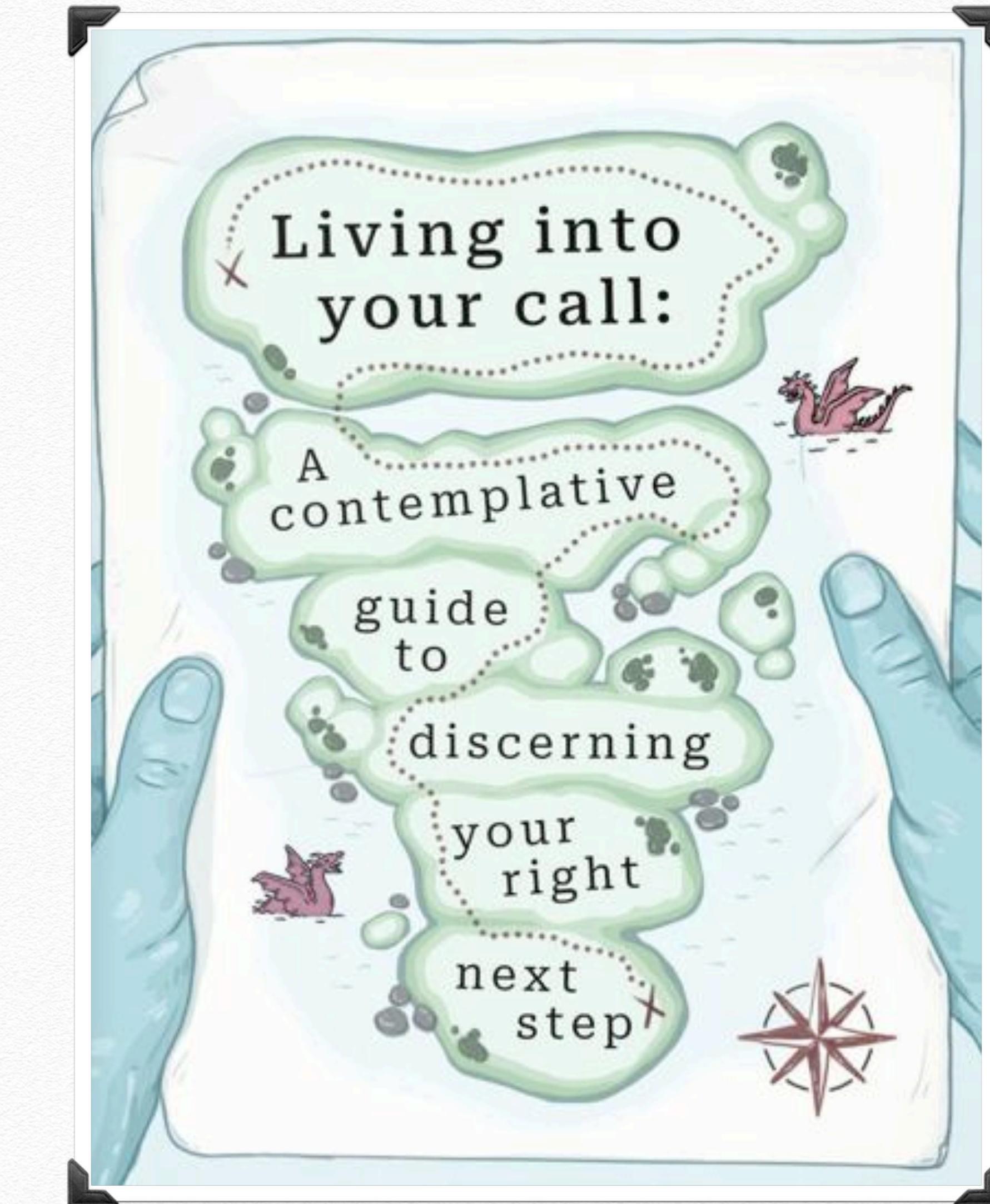
**Leadership & Wisdom** Item 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 5: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 11: \_\_\_\_\_ *Total Leadership & Wisdom:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Service, Justice & Generosity** Item 4: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 7: \_\_\_\_\_ Item 9: \_\_\_\_\_ *Total Service/Justice/Generosity:* \_\_\_\_\_

- Notice your highest one or two totals; these may point toward areas where your gifts are emerging or active.

# Also of Interest

- ❖ Beacon Hill Friends House sponsored a Vocational Discernment Project
- ❖ Designed to help Friends get greater clarity on “Living Into Your Call”
- ❖ Online at <https://bhfh.org/bhfh-discern/>
- ❖ Includes a workbook



*May You “Let Your Life Speak”*

Thank You

Handout Packet Available on LEYM  
website or via email

See you at Yearly Meeting!  
June 18-21, 2026  
in Ashland, OH

