

## Book Reviews...Book Reviews



WHAT CAN I DO?

Jack Ross

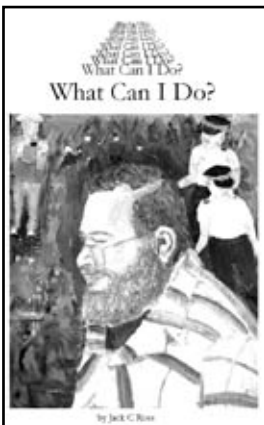
Root Cellar Press, 2004

Reviewed by Margaret Slavin

*What Can I Do?* is not easily classified — like the life it reflects, the thoughtful, faithful, varied and smiling life of Jack C. Ross. This collection of poems and essays includes poetry about getting along with one's neighbours, an essay on clowning, a truly inspirational account of non-violent response to street violence, and reminders of earthly delights: Hayden string quartets; Toasted cheese sandwich; Co-operative work; Ripe nectarines.

And gems like this: "Hell is the place/ where souls pass / on the golden street/ without greeting."

Jack and



Dottie lived on Chicago's West Side during the days that Jack worked with American Friends Service Committee. Some of this collection comes from those years, and from Jack's trip south to recruit black students for interracial youth projects. Others were inspired by the years in Argenta, where they still live; from Lubicon Lake; from growing older; and, more recently, from jail time for issues about water. In between were years teaching sociology, and years with recurring non-violent action alongside First Nations people: Cree, Chippewan, Mohawk, and Shoshone. There's even the memorable talk given at Canadian Yearly Meeting 2002 by the 'Quirk of Barely Audible Meeting'.

Friends will love this book and, in dark days, we need it.

*What Can I Do?* can be ordered from the Root Cellar Press, Box 1557, Rossland BC, V0G 1Y0 for \$15 Canadian. plus \$2.25 for shipping and handling.

— Margaret Slavin

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LIVING THE WAY: QUAKER SPIRITUALITY AND COMMUNITY

Ursula Jane O'Shea  
Quaker Books, 2003

Originally published in 1993 by Australia Yearly Meeting as the 28th James Backhouse Lecture, *Living the Way* has been republished since it now forms part of the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre's learning package *Hearts and Minds Prepared*.

Jane O'Shea traces the life cycle of the Religious Society of Friends, and examines its current state of transition, pointing to the unique aspects of Quaker spirituality and community life that have the power to revitalise modern Quakerism. The chapters form a fascinating flow: Spirituality; A generation of prophets: *The foundation of Quakerism*; A great multitude to be gathered: *The expansion of Quakerism*; Settling the flock: *Stabilising the Quaker Way*; 'Quaker caution and love of detail gone to seed': *Destabilisation and breakdown of the Quaker tradition*; and Way will open: *Quakerism in transition*.

In her introduction, Janey O'Shea informs us that she wants "to affirm that when Friends comply with the searching demands of the inward Light, we will find sure and certain guidance directing our lives, individually and corporately." Through her book, she asks "Friends to focus on the *how* of the Quaker way, exploring from the perspectives of the past, the limitations and possibilities of our future" in relation to modern day challenges. A most inspiring book!

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FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL MEETINGS

Volume 2 of the *Eldership and Oversight Handbooks*, 2nd edition  
Quaker Books, 2003

Another reprint, this book was first published in 1998 by Quaker Home Service. Reprinted in the series of handbooks offering infor-

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mation, support and guidance to all those responsible for eldership and oversight — for spiritual and pastoral care, it is based on the experience and insights of Quakers in Britain. Complementing *Quaker Faith & Practice* guidelines, this book clearly sets out the tasks of funeral coordination, and gives information on low-cost and 'green' funerals. In addition to a clear look at responsibilities and delegation, thinking ahead to one's own funeral, preliminary planning of funeral, detailed planning of funeral, planning for the meeting for worship, duties of the day, introducing and closing the meeting, and tasks afterwards, there is also a section on the direct experience of Friends and meetings.

These 25 extracts are from contributions sent by many meetings, and include testimonies of personal experience. Two excerpts: 10.06 "We should attempt to ensure that our funeral arrangements match up to our spiritual needs at the time of bereavement." and 10.13 "Some meetings agree guidelines, and stress the importance of silence. However, music is permitted in moderation [in ours]. In one case that meant very modern pop music which did not seem out of place for a burial of a young man with such interests who had loving and very genuine friends."

The end of the book contains checklists for preliminary planning and for detailed planning, as well as lists of publications, organisations, a blank section in which to insert your own Meeting's notes, and a "Funerals and memorials form

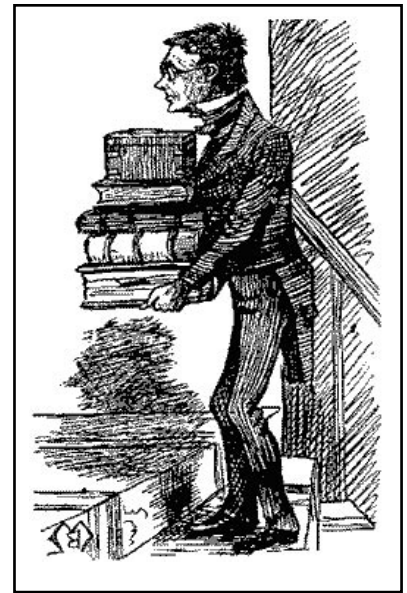
— guidance and information in advance" that can be photocopied, or adapted, according to your needs. This book is extremely useful and every Meeting should have at least two copies, one for reference, and one to loan to Friends.

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THIS IS WHO I AM: LISTENING WITH OLDER FRIENDS  
*Volume 9 of the Eldership and Oversight Handbooks*  
*Quaker Books, 2003*

This book will be useful to those responsible for pastoral care in Quaker meetings and elsewhere, and to people of all ages who listen to each other in love and friendship. The 'Spirituality and Ageing Group' that started at a conference at Woodbrooke, helped with the publication of this book. Photos of the hands of older Friends highlight the beauty and the wisdom offered in its pages. The book begins with two Friends' stories, which explain the sense of urgency behind the work, and give us an idea of what we lose by not listening to older Friends. The book ends with appendices that offer a brief history of the project, and a further reading list, as well as addresses useful for British Friends.

This little volume asks how far we, as Friends, recognise the often unanswered hunger for companionship in older Friends, and how well-equipped we are to respond. The authors address those who are aware of such needs, yet anxious about their own ability to respond in ways



that will be welcome. "There are suggestions for subjects which rarely arise in casual encounters but which may be crying out to be aired. The book also offers ways of entering into and sustaining such conversation. It is written in the hope of strengthening those qualities on which Friends most tend to pride themselves yet which may be less strong than we believe: the gifts of good listening and of faithful friendship." At every stage of life we need to know and be known by others. Many of us are thus blessed in our daily lives through countless interactions so familiar we hardly notice them. Some of us, however, suffer from a lack of knowing and being known by others. Loneliness is a part of life for all from time to time, and this book highlights that "old age is particularly a time when profound changes and relinquishments tend to coincide with a great risk of loneliness." The companionship possibilities suggested in these pages offers to enrich those who follow them in unsuspected ways.

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