

Spiritual Work at the Edge of Certainty

By Bea Chapman

The February 2005 Mid-Winter Gathering of Friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns was held at Ghost Ranch Conference Centre, New Mexico. It is owned by the Presbyterian Church, and its 46 buildings include a dining hall, library, barns and corrals as well as a lower pavilion where most of our meetings together took place. Ghost Ranch is in a picturesque location high in the desert mountains. The altitude of 6,500 feet above sea level meant we had to rest and drink plenty of water.

The M.W. gathering was held in “a context of uncertainty,” where we sought to discern the best course of action to choose spiritual practices

that allow us to grow and thrive. Upon arrival, we were separated into worship-sharing groups, which met at 9 am each mornings.

Deborah Fisch, our plenary speaker, focused our attention on practices to help us thrive on the edges of our experience. The Meeting for Worship for Business looked at creative activities to explore the changing attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer concerns — both inside Quakerism and on the Virginia Frontier.

Kitty Ufford-Chase and Marcela Diaz addressed concerns and cross-cultural issues in the Southwest. We looked at the work still necessary on this boundary. Thus, we were able to share with each other those things that allow us to centre and

then move freely into the world; speaking with love, and working with the deep commitment that comes from spiritual awareness. On Sunday evening we had a Talent Night Extravaganza and a not-so-silent auction.

During this gathering we re-created our community — each time deepening our lasting friendships and welcoming newcomers into our ever-widening circle of seekers. There were over 200 in attendance, though only a few Canadians. One evening as we heard the 30-year history of this group, we learned that it was very small at the outset. It would please me if we could create a similar vital group in Canada. ☘

Bea Chapman is a member of Ottawa Meeting.



Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners



Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners, guided by Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel, are available to listen to any Canadian Friend disclose harm done on matters of sexual harassment or abuse, or any other topic a Friend may need to discuss.

If you need a listener, the first step is to approach a trusted Friend within your Monthly Meeting (MM), or to go to your MM Ministry and Counsel. If this path is not comfortable, you may contact a National Listener. Listeners seek to be present from a place of spirit-centred openness - to hold the caller and the situation in the Light, and to listen with tenderness. Knowing the healing that comes from simply being heard, we offer you a safe and confidential space in which to speak. One call might be all you need. If not, we have the task of discerning with you what a next step could be: whether a committee of care, of clearness, or of oversight might be appropriate; or how to find other possible resources.

The National Listeners have experience in listening to issues around sexual abuse, and to other concerns.

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Whenever possible, please contact us first to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak later.