

Come Passion

by Diana Mitchell

children of Africa call to me
I hear them in my sleep
moved to make a difference
my friends and I comb overstuffed
garages
for castoffs to sell

we send the money off into space,
hoping it lands in the right bellies
but I know it will not be enough
never enough

children of the city call to me
I hear them in my sleep
I see with eyes open
my family and I sift quantities of
leftovers from great grandmother,
grandmother, mother, ourselves

we send the money off into the city,
hoping it fills soup pots for a few nights
but we know it will not be enough
with so much, how is there not enough?

come passion,
go with me to the footpaths
where the lost ones sleep
covered with newspapers
and lie with them for a while,
feel the cold
know the emptiness of gut and spirit
that hold them closer than any mother

it is not enough to do six good deeds
to wash twenty pairs of dirty feet with
our tears
to go home to the firelight
to listen to voices calling, calling
it is not enough

Diana Mitchell
Saanich Peninsula Monthly Meeting

Speaking Truth to Empower

by E. Daisy Anderson

Day in, day out while writhing in pain
in a psychiatric hospital bed, I listened to
Mendelssohn's music and lyrics to Psalm 55.
"Hear my prayer, O God, incline Thine ear!
Thyself from my petition do not hide." The
psychiatrists were baffled by the diagnosis because
they actively sought mental pathology, completely
missing the real diagnosis: excruciating withdrawal
from medications. I was fighting for my life and
pleading like the psalmist, "O God, hear my cry!"
Over the years my medications had been started,
then stopped, with the same disastrous results. The
physicians, unaware of their blundering blamed
me for not trying.

Against all odds I recovered. Then came
the questions. How could so-called standard
psychiatric care have gone so wrong during
the thirty-five years I was rendered weak and
vulnerable by powerful treatments? How many
others are in the same trap? Why does our society
not take a deeper look at how a so-called healing
system swells with sicker patients? The developing
world has much more positive results. What do
they do that we don't?

How many Quakers are aware that we who live
with the label 'mental' die twenty-five years earlier
than the general population? How many are aware
that our treatment can dull our spiritual openness
and impair our judgment; that psychiatric
treatment can isolate us from our families and
communities, leaving us to exist in poverty? How
many are aware that if we are offered effective,
compassionate care we could live happy, healthy,
productive lives, knowing who we are and being
in touch with our spiritual selves?

My years of praying for a listening ear paid
off when a compassionate psychologist patiently
listened and guided me to a meaningful, productive