

Coming Home

by Madeline Campbell

I remember the very first Meeting I attended. Despite having no idea what I was supposed to do, it felt right. It was a place that I was meant to be.

Much has happened in the twelve years since, but it still feels like home. No matter which building or which city I go to, Meeting is home. This home may look different but it is a place where I belong. Along the way much has happened. I learned a lot about myself and about the people around me. Like a family, there has been discord. There have been times that leaving would have been the easy thing, the less painful thing. I haven't always agreed with everything, and I haven't always felt like staying, but I did. This is where God put me, where I am meant to be. I have grown in this community. I have learned what a community should, and sometimes what a community should not look like.

I often need to remind myself that those who harm me hurt too. If I remember that we are all in community together then my pain lessens. When I remember to see that of God in the other, then I am more tender with the other. Remembering that we are in community together, brings me to a place of giving, and reminds me that it is also okay to receive.

A community is where we are. Where support and love are given to all. The place where fears, joys, sorrow, hopes, and time, are given. Community is a people gathered to give to each other and the world all that we are called to give, at the time that it needs to be given. God has shown us a way to be together; a way to worship together despite our diversity. I cherish this and have found comfort in this when life gets between me and that sense of awe that the world inspires in me.

Our community is diverse, teaching all the wonder that being together can teach. Community spans more than the small area in which we live. It spans all around us. If we were mindful that our community encompasses all of creation then we might remember to care for it more tenderly.

*Madeline Campbell
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Retreating to the Present

by Rick Juliusson

Many Friends can look back on one event, one interaction, one particularly centred Meeting that made them feel truly at home in a Meeting. For our family, that pivotal moment was our first Easter retreat four years ago. Since then, the annual family-oriented gathering of Vancouver Friends has been a source of renewal, inspiration, and celebration. This year was more of that same old goodness.

We walked and talked, children got wet, birds were spotted, songs were sung. Virtually no schedule was planned, yet we managed to "do" enough and mostly just "be" together. The weekend was a welcome respite from our busy lives, and a chance for deeper connection than the half hour after meeting may allow.

Of course, no one can sum up the impact or lessons of a weekend together, like a child. At our closing circle we did a check-in: "What's important to us right now?" As we grown-ups mused on climate change, career paths, centering down and such, one of our beloved "tweeners" brought us back to the present with a heartfelt, "What's important to me is that we only have one hour left, so I want to have the most fun I can with my friends in that last hour".

As Shaun's message was sinking in, 5-year-old Camille completed the lesson, just in case some of us adults were still too busy in our heads to hear: "What's important to me is sitting here on this chair".

Thank you Shaun, Camille, and all Friends for sharing this time of Renewal, and reminding us that Community can only happen when we're all fully present in a moment.

*Rick Juliusson, VIMM
with son Galen*

