Eleventh Month: Stewardship

Advices from *FAITH AND PRACTICE* (1993)

John Woolman's simple statement in *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich* (1793) may serve as a beginning for all consideration of stewardship: "As Christians, all we possess is the gift of God, and in the distribution of it we act as his stewards; it becomes us therefore to act agreeably to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants."

The principle of stewardship thus applies to all that we have and are, as individuals, as members of groups, and inhabitants of the earth. As individuals, we are obliged to use our times, our various abilities, our strength, our money, our material possessions and other resources in a spirit of love, aware that we hold these gifts in trust, and are responsible to use them in the Light. As Friends, and as members of other groups, we seek to apply the same spirit to the use and contribution of our corporate resources. As people, we are obliged to cherish the earth, and to protect all its resources in a spirit of humble stewardship, committed to the right sharing of these resources among people everywhere.

"To turn all we possess into a channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives"—this, in the words of Woolman,is the meaning of Quaker stewardship.

Queries:

- Do we regard our time, talents, energy, money, material possessions and other resources as gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light we are given? How do we express this conviction?
- How do we use the gifts we are given in ways that build community and bring us closer to the Source and Center?
- How do we exercise our respect for the balance of nature? Are we careful to avoid poisoning the land, air and sea and to use the world's resources with care and consideration for future generations and with respect for all life?

Quotes from Friends:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you, and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Job 12: 7-8

God calls Friends today…to look into our hearts and examine our relationship with the rest of Creation, and to recognize that our neighbor includes the entire Earth community. We, too, are being asked to give up habits and things which have made our lives seem easier, just as slaves appeared to make life easier for their owners.
Lisa Gould, 1994

Our bodies have so much to teach us. When we listen, they are offering us a constant commentary on our thoughts and actions…The body has a mind of its own. It is not just the obedient servant of the mind. Too often we treat the sacred vessel of our lives like a support system for the head.
Jaya Karsemeher, 2010

Ye have no time but this present time, therefore prize your time, for your soul's sake.
George Fox 1652