Twelfth Month: Simplicity

Advices from *FAITH AND PRACTICE* (1993)

Quaker simplicity is one of the fruits of a primary commitment to the Spirit of God. Writing of simplicity, Thomas Kelly reminds us, "Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center—a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time, but it occupies all of our time."

Friends are advised to strive for simplicity in the use of their earnings and property, and in their style of living, choosing that which is simple and useful. This does not mean that life is to be poor and bare, destitute of joy and beauty. All that promotes fullness of life and aids in serve for God is to be accepted with thanksgiving. Each must determine by the Light that is given what promotes and what hinders the compelling search for inner peace.

Queries:

- Do we center our lives in the awareness of God so that all things take their rightful place?
- Do we keep our lives uncluttered with things and activities? What helps us avoid commitments beyond our strength and Light?
- How does our Meeting help us simplify our lives? How do we order our individual lives to nourish our spiritual growth?
- Do we keep to simplicity, moderation, and honesty in our speech, our manner of living, and our daily work?

Quotes from Friends:

The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age….

Thomas Kelly, 1941

Plain living is a form of inward simplicity that leads us to listen for the "still, small voice" of God's claim upon our lives. It is both a spiritual lens and a discipline of holy obedience. This way of living simplifies our lives because when we focus our energies on what we discern by listening within, we are able to release the extraneous activities and possessions that clutter our path.

Catherine Whitmire, 2001

True simplicity should connote not poverty but, rather, a richness of spirit, a joy in living, the nurturing of creativity, sensitivity to the natural world, and love for all its creatures. As an expression of this love, this true simplicity, we must then, too, commit ourselves to building a more equitable world, a world in which this simplicity may thrive and be enjoyed by everyone.

Ann Kriebel, 1984