

Query: In what ways do I honor the diverse gifts, talents and resources of the individuals and communities with whom I work?

(An Introduction to Quaker Testimonies, American Friends Service Committee)



On the table are the materials for a Faith & Play story called "Gifts." This story talks about the different kinds of gifts there are and then discusses those inner gifts that each one of us are given, that are a special part of who we are. The story talks about people with the gift of making others feel welcome, the gift of service, or doing things for others, the gift of deep questioning, the gift of music. Throughout the telling, the story repeats the phrase "these gifts are not for this person alone, they are given to them for the whole community." The final person in the story is the person who does not yet know what their gifts are, but who will listen deeply within and whose community will help them to discover and use their gifts.

Today, I wanted to spend a little time reflecting on the various gifts that individuals might bring to our [meeting, church, school, organization] community. Perhaps as you are listening to some of these descriptions, you may identify with these gifts yourself, or may think of someone you know who demonstrates these gifts.

In the Pendle Hill pamphlet, Spiritual Gifts, the Beloved Community, and Covenant, Emily Provance writes:

"A community works like a jigsaw puzzle. Everyone brings a piece or two. And God does not intend for everybody to do exactly the same things. We all have spiritual gifts, and these gifts are for the purpose of sharing in community. It's tricky to recognize (these) gifts. We often don't realize our gifts are gifts. They come so naturally to us that we think everyone must have that ability. And we can overlook other people's gifts because sometimes they're so outside our frame of reference that we don't even perceive them. Or we might notice the annoying parts of someone else's giftedness and never realize the positive ways in which that gift acts in our community."

Emily groups these kinds of gifts into 3 categories: seeing gifts, loving gifts, and doing gifts.

Seeing gifts are gifts people have that help change the ways in which we perceive the world. They might be gifts of knowledge or wisdom, gifts of questioning and seeking the truth, gifts of noticing others and how they are feeling.

Loving gifts are those gifts focused on care for others. Gifts of making people feel welcome and safe in our community, giving gifts or service to other people, the gift of caring deeply for individuals and groups of people in our community and wanting them to feel included.

Doing gifts are gifts that are focused outward, looking at how people contribute in a practical sense to our community. Gifts of organization or administration, gifts of spreading enthusiasm and excitement, gifts of inspiring others through words, gifts of leadership and teaching.

In our listening worship [time of reflection], I invite you to consider these different types of gifts, and which gifts you think you or those around you bring to add to the jigsaw puzzle that makes up our community. If you feel moved to do so, please share either about your own gifts, or the gifts you have observed in others.

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