PENDLE HILL

Wallingford, Pennsylvania 19086

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Files **DATE:** March 8, 1994

FROM: Dan Seeger **CC:** Chris Ravndal

SUBJECT: Parker J. Palmer on the Meeting for Learning

I read two books by Parker Palmer some years ago. The first was *A Company of Strangers* and the second *To Know As We Are Known*. *A Company of Strangers* addresses the issue of Christian responsibility in public life. *To Know As We Are Known* is subtitled "A Spirituality of Education." I do remember feeling that these were very profitable books to read, and I will have to find time some day soon to go over the books again and note my underlinings and marginalia.

In the meantime, an essay by Parker has surfaced entitled, "Meeting for Learning: Education in a Quaker Context." The material which follows comprises a reflection on this brief essay. What is the relevance of Parker's thought to the current condition of Pendle Hill? Does it point us in a direction of improvement, does it stretch us, or does it reinforce tendencies which have already proceeded too far?

The main thrust of Parker's essay is built upon his metaphor of the classroom as a "meeting" in the Quaker sense of the word, in particular, as a "meeting for learning" in the same way that other Quaker meetings are meetings for business, for clearness, for marriage, and for memorial--that is, all are meetings for worship with a special concern, or focus, or goal. Parker acknowledges that his image is "only a metaphor," and that it does not deal with "practical pedagogy" or "educational technique." My summary view is that the metaphor is powerful, yet incomplete, or at least incompletely developed in Parker's essay. Whether the metaphor becomes a force for good or ill in contemporary Pendle Hill life depends upon how the unaddressed underlying assumptions are "filled in" or developed. In fact, in as much as the essay avoids treating, or acknowledging, the questions which are contiguous to the material it does treat, one might argue that it could be a root cause of some of the malaise presently troubling Pendle Hill.

One could certainly not quarrel with the idea that a gathering to study, particularly a gathering to explore religious and spiritual themes, should be approached in the same spirit as a meeting for worship, and needs the same total preparation of the body, mind and spirit that comes from taking care to live authentically between classes. Nor could one take issue with Parker's idea of dialogue, a give-and-take between the learner and the material and the other learners. Nor could one deny that the teacher is in some sense also a learner, and that the students have the capacity to teach. But one question which lurks beneath Parker's metaphor is the question of how far it is useful to go in blurring the distinction between teacher and student.

We can readily agree that a teacher should not treat students as mere "receptacles" which should be filled with knowledge, particularly with the teacher's "own" knowledge. Parker speaks of a "democracy of knowledge" in which the class tests truth and the teacher's role loses visibility "while gaining in subtlety." The subtlety is so thorough that "it should be impossible at any moment to anticipate who will be teacher next." In this atmosphere of egalitarianism, the teacher will, of course, have expert resources on the subject, but will somehow have to make this available "without making students feel like the resentful recipients of welfare."

Now, as has been mentioned, no one would want to deny that a good teacher can learn much from her or his students. But surely in a school of spiritual study it is possible to suggest that the teacher ought to mentor the students and offer a kind of leadership which, in general, the students do not necessarily offer the teacher. Here at Pendle Hill it is true that we might occasionally have enrolled in the student body an academic expert in Quaker history who may teach the Quakerism teacher a thing or two, but surely it should be the expectation that we should appoint teachers who can be expected to know a good deal more than the average student in their given field. Is it wise to cultivate an atmosphere of such egalitarianism that students resent this, rather than being grateful for it? Should we pay teachers salaries to do something a student could do as well? Recently, when Bill Taber was sick, and I asked about a replacement for him, Dean of Program John Anderson suggested that by the eighth week of term the teachers are no longer necessary! Perhaps there is a potential budgetary saving here for which we all should be grateful.

For those who may fear that at present Pendle Hill may have slid too far in the direction of formlessness, relaxation, and a too-easy substitution of fashionable slogans for serious explorations, Parker's text does offer some comfort in limited passages, but these passages tend to be minor themes, or partial retractions, for an over-riding thrust of relativism. Here is one such useful passage:

> "In education, the stress on the total self has too often resulted in an outpouring of emotion at the expense of ideas, logic, and fact, for our

feelings are more readily available to us than our minds. We must make sure the meeting for learning does not simply encourage expressions which come cheaply, without discipline. Wholeness is the norm, not a new tyranny of feeling over intellect."

Similarly, Parker does seem to wish to take the studying of texts seriously. Thus:

> "The encounter between persons in a meeting for learning is deepened and disciplined by a 'third party' to the dialogue--whether that be an idea, a text, some data, or a concrete experience. This 'third thing' mediates the relation between selves. It saves the dialogue from becoming a simple sharing of subjectivities. The common text--a poem, for example--has an irreducible reality of its own. And that reality is capable of breaking through the closure and deadlock which can sometimes occur in a simple dialogue. It enables the participants to speak and to listen to something outside of themselves."

Having reduced the role of teacher to an extraordinarily subtle and somewhat undefined office, Parker seeks to save the learning process from being a mere pooling of ignorance by relying on the text or other "third party." But why should not the teacher and her or his accumulated knowledge also perform this "third party" office as well?

Moreover, it is at this juncture that Parker's argument seems to beg a very important question. Who picks the text or other "third party" element? Is this a random affair? Does it occur by chance? When Pendle Hill decides to run a course on the Gospel of John rather than the theories of B.F. Skinner or Sigmund Freud, it is making a statement about its concept of truth. Is it useful to pretend that such discernment is not occurring?

The thrust of Parker's essay, it seems to me, is that authority is vested in the class as a group and that as a result of the process of sharing and dialogue, individuals in the group, and perhaps even the group itself, might arrive at some surprising outcome. Here the meeting for learning as described by Parker seems to depart from an ordinary Quaker meeting. A Friends meeting, for example, is under the care of elders who ensure that the meeting for worship remains a centered and disciplined process with certain characteristics. Anyone who has ever belonged to a large meeting in an urban setting, for example, need have no doubt about the importance of pro-actively maintaining the character of the meeting for worship so that worshippers do not become merely a captive audience for visitors or attenders to assail from self-erected soap boxes. Moreover, the typical Friends' monthly meeting is established with much more care than is a class at Pendle Hill. People are admitted into membership after a testing process which usually lasts a year or

longer and may actually be several years. The monthly meeting operates within a discipline established by the yearly meeting and candidacies for membership are usually reviewed via a clearness process in which the candidate's familiarity with the yearly meeting's faith and practice is explored. Careful minutes are kept of the actions taken on both the monthly and the yearly meeting levels so that when large issues arise they are tested through a dialogic process with the past and well as the present. All subscribe to a discipline of reading scripture and various Quaker "classics." This is not to say that Quakerism or an individual Quaker meeting is necessarily stuck in what has been. But it is far from the somewhat rootless and loosely assembled collection of classmates which Parker seems to describe as the ultimate arbiters of their own spiritual curriculum. To suggest that each assemblage of twelve Pendle Hill students is qualified to determine what ultimate Truth is is to make the pretensions of the Papacy look modest by comparison!

Lurking in an ill-defined way beneath Parker's metaphor of a meeting for learning is the question of truth. Is truth something we invent or create for ourselves? Is everyone's truth as good as everyone else's truth, the only measure of validity being the passion with which an idea or set of ideas or philosophies is held by one party or another? Or is truth something which exists independently of us, something which with reverence, care, discipline and practice we can enlarge our grasp of by slow degrees, or even by a sudden holistic mystical insight?

Parker is correct in his assertion that the learning process is mysterious and that there is a profound sense in which no one knows what is going to happen in the course of it. Movement toward spiritual truth is the result of the operation of grace and not of human contrivance. Students might come here and after a period of study wind up in quite unexpected places, spiritually and philosophically. But does the fact that we cannot control or predict what will happen mean that we have no goal or standard by which to judge our efforts? Can the curriculum of a school of spiritual study be simply a random affair? Is there a range of desirable spiritualities toward which we hope people might be led, and are there other spiritual postures which, if they appeared too often among "graduates," would incline us to re-examine what we are doing? The concern I would be inclined to have about Parker's essay is that because of its unfulfilled or uncompleted nature it can be too readily co-opted into the "relativist" mindset.

> "Against all these pressures the meeting for learning will be a place where people can adventure toward truth without any preconceptions of what it might be--and without any expectation that it will 'do' anything for them except be true!"

This is certainly a good practice for students of spirituality to follow. If students instantly screen as good or bad, valid or invalid, every challenge which comes their way using whatever consciousness they have already achieved, they will

obviously remain in a rut. But can it follow that the school itself has no conception of truth which it is seeking to advance? Or is it simply a kind of neutral ground, a kind of marketplace of ideas, in which different dogmatisms compete with each other for the allegiance of students?

Jesus said that we cannot live by bread alone. He understood that without a grasp of spiritual truth we perish even though we may be technically alive. Indeed, if one is uninformed by a vision which elicits such spiritual enthusiasm that one is willing to die for it, life becomes a dismal affair indeed. It is not sickness or masochism that causes martyrdom stories to be central in religious traditions. This is the entire point of religious truth--something which gives life ultimate meaning. We have seen how this hunger for faith and for truth can become distorted into fanaticism and intolerance. But could the sort of casual relativism Parker seems to suggest be properly called a spirituality of any kind? Do people die for a vision which may or may not be true, which they humbly regard as merely a preference chosen from among a vast array of possible preferences? And can a school of spirituality really flourish, can it inspire people's commitment of time, energy and money, if there is no animating vision, if all it stands for is the idea that everyone creates his or her own truth and the only common value is an amiable tolerance?

Obviously a Quaker school must be open as an institution to new truth. But presumably such new truth is defined through a careful discernment process conducted in the good order of Friends. There is definitely an adventure involved, but it must be a clear and orderly one.

To conclude I would like to offer the hypothesis that those who advance "formlessness" as an ideal, as if Quakerism were simply a shapeless, pliable, empty vessel into which anything might be poured, are usually themselves dogmatic adherents of one view or another; they usually are not prepared to practice the amiable tolerance which their approach should logically require; their relativistic attitudes toward organization or curricula, and their egalitarianism regarding students and teachers, does not reflect personal flexibility and non-dogmatism. Rather, their advocacy of structurelessness merely serves to generate a context in which their own pet ideas can flourish unimpeded by the discipline which a corporate discernment process would entail.

Parker's essay has many valuable insights, but also seems to point to many of the problems which beset Pendle Hill without offering any particular help in resolving them. I will make it a point to review more carefully his larger effort incorporated in the book *To Know As We Are Known* to see if some of these tensions are addressed there.

ISSN 0360-5787

pendle hill

A QUAKER CENTER FOR STUDY AND CONTEMPLATION

MEETING FOR LEARNING:

Education in a Quaker Context

Parker J. Palmer

Whatever else Pendle Hill may be, it is a place of teaching and learning. These are staples of our life together, whether we meet in seminar, at work, in personal relations, or at any of the other stops on our daily round. More than that, we teach and learn within a context called Quakerism which, at its best, offers images of life to inspire and question the way we educate each other. If these Quaker images were merely parochial I do not think I would be drawn to them, for I am not a Friend. But I find in some of them a universal quality. They shed, for me, a deep-searching light on this thing called education.

Education has occupied a considerable portion of my life. As a youngster and young man, I was a student. At the outset of my career, I was a teacher. Now that I have been freed from career and enabled to pursue my vocation, I find myself teacher-and-student in constant interplay. And as my vocation deepens, I experience the truth of Whitehead's claim that "the essence of education is that it be religious." For Whitehead, a religious education is one which evokes duty and reverence. Our duty is to know: "Where attainable knowledge could have changed the issue, ignorance has the guilt of vice." But our knowledge is made humble by reverence, by the perception "that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity." (*The Aims of Education*, p. 26)

The centrality of these themes in my life may help explain my attraction to the educational images of Quakerism. For as I see the Society of Friends, teaching and learning are a way of life, and reverence and duty (read "faith and practice") are the complementary movements of that life. These, at least, are themes which have come alive for me at Pendle Hill.

The Idea of "Meeting"

Much of what I want to say about education in a Quaker context can be organized around one of Quakerism's most central, concrete, yet spacious images: the image of "meeting." Among Friends, of course, there is first the meeting for

worship, but then there is the meeting for business, the meeting for marriage, the meeting on the occasion of a graduation, the meeting in memorial of one who has died. I remember the jogging my mind got when I realized that the use of "meeting" in all these contexts was no accident; that Friends believe all meetings can and should be held in the same spirit that informs worship.

Worship and business, for example, had always been contrary activities to me. The one was quiet, the other noisy; the one solemn, the other often contentious; the one selfless, the other motivated by a simple desire for results and success. But Friends made a simple and compelling point: The common element in both worship and business should be the search for truth—and the expectation that, if we give it space and time, truth will come to us. Though I now know more about the difficult discipline required to "meet" in that way, I remain convinced of that claim as both reality and hope.

As my understanding of meeting enlarges, it becomes clear that one may speak of another kind of meeting: meeting for learning. Where else should the search for truth have greater prominence than in the process of education? Of course, for many of us, "education" has come to mean a scramble for information, which leads to grades, which lead to a diploma, which leads to a job. There are too many educational institutions where truth is not the point! Perhaps the image of a "meeting for learning" will remind us of forgotten depths in the educational process, just as the silent meeting for worship once stood as a rebuke to ways of worship which put the human before the divine.

I want to use that image to explore three aspects of education by asking three questions about the "meeting for learning." First, what is the nature of such a meeting? What are its textures, rhythms, shapes? Second, how does one prepare for a meeting for learning? What should the teacher/learner bring to it? Third, what do we take from a meeting for learning? What consequences flow from it?

What I have to say is only metaphor; I shall not deal with practical pedagogy, with educational technique. At Pendle Hill, unencumbered as we are with diplomas, credits and grades, we have the luxury of exploring this metaphor in practice, and I do not presume to know what applications it may have for other educational settings. But there is power in metaphor. If you can internalize it, make it your own, the applications will surely follow. One does not "apply" worship to life. You make it your practice until worship and life become one.

What is the Nature of a Meeting for Learning?

A meeting for learning is, in the first place, a genuine encounter between persons, a "meeting" in the literal sense. In conventional classrooms the focus is on the isolated self. The teacher addresses the individual student, treating him or her as a receptacle to be filled with knowledge. But in a meeting for learning the individual is always in relationship, and knowledge emerges in dialogue. It is not only what the student hears but what the student says back that counts. Here, learning happens *between* persons and not simply *within* the learner.

Real meeting requires fresh expectation each time we meet, so a meeting for learning must guard against our tendency to stereotype one another as familiarity

grows. Studies have shown what incredible damage can be done when teachers respond to students on the basis of such stereotypes; if you assume that a student is slow, the student becomes slow! When we anticipate and predict one another's responses, we kill off the novelty which infuses authentic education. Against this tendency, the image of meeting urges us to encounter each other as strangers whenever we meet. For we are strangers to each other and to ourselves—unable to reveal at any moment all that we hold within. When we meet to learn with the openness which we bring to a stranger, teaching and learning are enriched.

The encounter between persons in a meeting for learning is deepened and disciplined by a "third party" to the dialogue—whether that be an idea, a text, some data, or a concrete experience. This "third thing" mediates the relation between selves. It saves the dialogue from becoming a simple sharing of subjectivities. The common text—a poem, for example—has an irreducible reality of its own. And that reality is capable of breaking through the closure and deadlock which can sometimes occur in a simple dialogue. It enables the participants to speak and to listen to something outside of themselves.

The presence of this third thing can also pose problems for education, just as trios in daily life are often more difficult than pairs. One member of the trio may feel especially protective of another, thus preventing the third from entering into the relationship. There have been times in my own teaching when I have tried to protect students from a text, or even protect the text from the students! The teacher must be responsible for watching these meetings with care, just as a thoughtful host establishes an atmosphere in which the guests can become truly known to one another.

If we are faithful to the image of "meeting," we can say even more about the relation of person and person and some third thing. For it is precisely in the rich and unpredictable mix of a triad that some truth beyond ourselves, some presence we do not create, might break in. So it is in a meeting for worship or business. One speaks, and a thought or a feeling enters the room. Another listens and responds both to the speaker and to what is spoken. As that process moves on, a fuller light can illumine us all.

In conventional education, the "third thing" becomes the focus of the educational process. The idea or text is objectified (and sometimes sanctified) to the exclusion of all else. It becomes the judge and jury of what goes on between selves; how often in the classroom have we sacrificed our own intuition to the idol of the printed page! But in meeting for learning, the idea or text is never given the prominence of doctrine. If the metaphor of meeting means anything to Friends, it means that experience is honored over doctrine. Only as doctrine has experiential validity can it be honored at all. The important question is not what the text says, but what it says that can be validated by you. Whether the subject is literature or atomic physics, the test is always experiential (or experimental).

One of the basic disciplines of an experience-based meeting for learning is to claim only what one knows, and no more. Think of what could be gained if we could adopt that discipline in education! The greatest gain would be the legitimate exposure of doubt and ignorance, of that whole range of questions and quandries which motivate inquiry but which we often suppress for fear of appearing unlearned. If we did not claim more than we know, students would learn that teach-

ers are seekers too. And teachers would learn directly what students need to know rather than having to ferret it out from a thicket of words.

Another important feature of the meeting for learning is that it places trust in the group itself. In conventional education the group is only an accident; it just happens to be more convenient for a teacher to deal with individuals in a group rather than separately. But in a meeting for learning the group assumes an importance at least equal to that of any individual in it—just as a meeting for worship is more than a collection of individuals in meditation.

There are at least two implications of this fact. One is that among members of the group there is equal opportunity for light or insight. Just as a meeting for learning is experiential and not doctrinal, so also does it lack priests or incontrovertible authorities on the matters in question. In a meeting for learning the roles of teacher and student continually move from one person to another, and it should be impossible at any moment to anticipate who will be teacher next.

A second implication of the trust vested in the group balances out the potential chaos of the first! Whatever insight one thinks one has in this democracy of knowledge must be put forward publicly and tested against the knowledge of the group. And the individual must feel the weight of the group's response to what he or she has offered—whether that response is one of support, negation, or indifference. In this respect a meeting for learning may be akin to a "clearness committee" in a Friends meeting.

These two features of a meeting for learning—the lack of formal authority and the trust placed in the group—might be taken as a downgrading of the teacher's role. Not so. In a meeting for learning the teacher's task is much more demanding than in the conventional classroom. The teacher will, of course, have expert resources on the subject. The question is how to nurture and encourage the expertise of others. The most difficult task in teaching is to give away what you have without making students feel like the resentful recipients of welfare. And the teacher must also be expert in helping build a group which can be trusted by its members. In this kind of education the role of the teacher gains in subtlety and significance what it loses in visibility.

But what must finally be trusted in a meeting for learning is not a text or the group or the technique of the teacher, but a truth that lies beyond all our devices. I do not have a language adequate to name this truth or tell how it comes to us—except for one symbol which arises naturally in any consideration of "meeting." I mean the silence. Conventional education is almost always busy and/or noisy, as it hustles after knowledge with confidence in its own methods and conceptions. But a meeting for learning will know when to cease moving and talking, to cease *pursuing* truth, and to wait in silence for truth to come into its midst. Some of my most important moments of learning have been in such stillness—as insight coalesced, as knowledge settled in, or as a simple receptiveness opened within me. Above all, the silence symbolizes that so much of what we seek to teach and learn involves mystery to be pondered as well as problems to be solved.

What Does One Bring to a Meeting for Learning?

There are some ways one ought *not* to prepare for a meeting for worship—for

example, by writing the script for a ministry one plans to deliver. To prepare in this way would undermine the spontaneity of worship and the influence of the gathered group upon it. But historically there *has* been a preparation for worship among Friends, one which involves the total fabric of a person's life: what one reads, how one works, one's relations with others, one's service to a world in need.

So it is in a meeting for learning. For conventional education, the learner prepares only with the mind. But in a meeting for learning, one's total life must be brought along—not only intellect, but values, beliefs, relationships, actions, aspirations. Education, no less than worship, makes a claim on our total lives, and we must come to both meetings with that totality recollected and held up to the light.

The danger with such advice is that some parts of our total selves come along more reluctantly than others, and these parts are likely to get left behind as we emphasize the whole. In education, the stress on the total self has too often resulted in an outpouring of emotion at the expense of ideas, logic, and fact, for our feelings are more readily available to us than our minds. We must make sure that the meeting for learning does not simply encourage expressions which come cheaply, without discipline. Wholeness is the norm, not a new tyranny of feeling over intellect.

We must also bring to meeting for learning a capacity for patient waiting and expectation, attitudes hard to cultivate in a time when education is being replaced by training. Authentic education is not necessarily quick in achieving results, nor are its results predictable in advance. And education suffers when we keep uprooting the plant to see how well it is growing. We must trust that growth is happening, and have patience to wait it out.

Here, of course, the meeting for learning moves against some of the strongest currents of contemporary schooling. The grading system, for example, is premised on the idea that results are predictable and measurable. The current rage for constant evaluation too often involves pulling up the plant before it can take root. Then there is the idea of "contract education" which seems to assume that we can know at the beginning of the course what is to be learned by the end, thereby eliminating the need for any course at all!

Against all these pressures the meeting for learning will be a place where people can adventure toward truth without any preconceptions of what it might be—and without any expectation that it will "do" anything for them except be true!

Finally, we prepare for a meeting for learning by trying to become vulnerable to both hurt and healing in others and ourselves. Such concerns are ignored in conventional education because that process supposedly deals with only a narrow slice of our selves, a trainable bunch of abilities and skills which do not seem vulnerable to feeling. Of course, that is an illusion. In most schools people pay a high emotional price in terms of self-image and self-confidence. In a meeting for learning those hurts, and our capacity to speak to each other's condition, become part of the educational process. Whatever the subject of study in a classroom the shadow subject is ourselves, our limits, our potentials. As long as that remains in the shadows, it will block both individual and group from full illumination. If both hurt and self-doubt can be brought into the light, then learning will flower.

What Does One Take From a Meeting for Learning?

No meeting must be "justified" by its consequences. Both meeting for worship and meeting for learning can be experienced as ends in themselves. There is a phrase in the Pendle Hill catalogue which, more than any other, first attracted me to this place: "The purpose of Pendle Hill is to provide a learning time in which life can be lived for its own sake." Living for the sake of living, and learning for the sake of learning: that is the spirit in which I wish both to live and to learn.

But when we live and learn that way, we discover that our lives and our learning then have genuine consequences, authentic results! This is Jesus's paradox, that "He who finds his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39). The power of a fully lived life or a truly learned mind is not a power to be sought or contrived. It comes only as we let go of what we possess and find ourselves possessed by a truth greater than our own.

The consequences of a meeting for learning are not uniform or predictable, for it is not possible to tell what shape the spirit will take in the life of individual or group. It may come in the form of art, or writing, or decision, or action. The meeting for learning must abandon the conventional notion that there is a single kind of outcome to be expected of all learners.

But at the same time, the meeting for learning can expect consequences. In these lie the test of whether the spirit has been moving, and how. It is part of the genius of Quakerism, I think, that the movement of the spirit is not enclosed as a private matter, but is made manifest in public ways and put to public test.

The most important consequence of any meeting is the nurture of community, of recentered and reconnected selves. Education (as contrasted with training) comes from a community and creates community. When a meeting breaks, the community goes out to embrace people and events in new and more powerful ways. When the community meets again, they bring all of that back with them, to hold it in the light.

Some Queries

If Friends take seriously the meaning of "meeting," then its spirit must apply to all they do—not least this thing called education. But there are other spirits abroad in the world which will discourage the meeting for learning. Teachers may be wary of losing their authority, their role. Students may be reluctant to be drawn into greater involvement with education than many of them think they want. Institutions may balk because their business of sorting and certifying people is contrary to the spirit of genuine meeting.

But if Friends wish to conduct their education in some other spirit the reasons must be cogent and compelling. The meeting is such a central image for Friends that to deny it in the education Friends offer is to deny the image itself. And quite apart from Friends there is urgent need in this world for styles of education which will raise up peacemakers, inventors of new futures, and persons confident of their own humanity—not competitors, consumers, and diminished selves.

Of course it is more in the spirit of Friends to ask questions than to give advice, so though I do not recant the advice already given I want to close with some queries! Here are a few which come to me as I ponder the "meeting for learning;" perhaps there are others you will want to ask yourself:

- Do I come to learning prepared for a genuine meeting between myself, other persons, ideas and texts?
- Do I try, in teaching and learning, to stay close to what I know experientially, and do I take the care to ask the same of others?
- Am I willing to devote the energy necessary to engage my whole self in the learning process, and especially to cultivate those aspects of myself which are underdeveloped?
- Do I take full advantage of the community of learning by sharing my insights with others, and by willingness to test myself against their experience? Do I help foster the learning community in this way?
- Do I appreciate that the consequences of learning will be different for different people, and am I open to unexpected consequences for myself?
- Do I accept the possibility that meeting for learning may change not only my mind but my life?

Parker J. Palmer is dean of studies at Pendle Hill.

PENDLE HILL is a Center for Study and Contemplation, founded in 1930 by members of the Religious Society of Friends. Each year a unique group of people comes together here for a living-learning experiment grounded in the cornerstones of worship, study, work, and caring for one another. It is an educational community of adults in search of more meaningful lives of wholeness, wrestling with their hardest problems and celebrating their deepest joys.

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Pendle Hill, Wallingford, Pennsylvania 19086

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED—return postage guaranteed.
THE PENDLE HILL BULLETIN published monthly with second-class postage paid at Wallingford, PA by Pendle Hill, Wallingford, Pennsylvania 19086
Number 284 May 1976