



a ministry of prayer and learning devoted to
the School of the Spirit

*is dedicated to helping all who wish to be more faithful listeners
and responders to the inward work of Christ.*

From LIVING IN A NEW WORLD
by **JOHN PUNSHON**

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*The second sign that suggested itself to me immediately is from the unprogrammed tradition. American Friends tend to see the separations of a couple of centuries ago as something that has harmed their fellowship. We can debate that proposition, but it is not obvious as it might seem. Some of the underground streams of the 19th century seem to me to be flowing together in the work of the **School of the Spirit**, which provides opportunities for a range of religious exercises which I find exciting and regard as highly significant and worthy of much wider participation.*

*The **School of the Spirit** has its roots in a gathering called together by Sandra Cronk and Kathryn Damiano while at Pendle Hill, to explore the topic of spiritual nurture and its limited presence and practice in the Religious Society of Friends at that time. Out of these conversations they discerned a call to begin the **School of the Spirit**, a ministry of prayer and learning devoted to the eternal school of the spirit "where the ministers and elders are always in session."*

*Nowadays the **School of the Spirit**, flourishing as a ministry under the care of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, offers participants retreats, spiritual nurture, spiritual friendships and guidance and conferences and training in various fields. Its concern is with ministry and preparation for ministry through faithfulness, silent worship, inward preparation and a deepening personal awareness of the inward presence of the Spirit.*

*These, in fact, were traditionally the disciplines necessary for the practice of our distinctive form of worship, on which so much else depends. This worship is not a free-for-all; it is not therapy, discussion, an encounter group -- nor even a period of testimony -- it is a distinctive and immensely powerful way to approach God and has its characteristic and necessary conventions embodied in those who are called to eldership and ministry, and whose gifts are recognized as such. It needs institutions and the **School of the Spirit** reminds us that we are a corporate body for mutual support as well as a collection of individuals.*

I think it is crucially important to encourage the growth of this kind of ministry among Friends. It gives body to our language and reminds us of why we are distinctive. In a period when serious questions are being asked in the programmed tradition (where more of this survives than is generally recognized) there is a great deal to be learned and practiced as a consequence of the work of this group of Friends. If you want hope, you will find it here.