

GOSHEN FRIENDS MEETING, PENNSYLVANIA
(founded 1736, rebuilt 1855)

As children, we balanced along
a solid green sandstone wall
which hugs the slight hilltop there
where our old meeting house gravely sits,
surrounded by its burial grounds, a few tree
elders and silent, time-mown lawns.

The road below seemed far away,
our playful steps precarious above
the occasional car, muttering along
the curve of black macadam.

Truly, our follow-my-leader game
was just four -or was it six?- feet up
from that hard surface, but we
perceived it as dangerous, risky,
a gaping pavement to avoid, almost
at the busy trafficked crossroads.

From the sober meeting house side,
we had only to clamber up a foot or two
from the grass, cautious of bare knees,
And the high daring fun began!

Then came delight in striding forward,
in line with my bold siblings, laughing —
was I first, or behind my brother and sisters?
Could we keep up, one foot then the other,
or would one of us teeter and jump down,
landing safely on the soft greensward?

And what of the chance we might fall off?
I only recall our height in the summer sun:
the remote possibility of rushing vehicles
increased our sense of First Day adventure.

Decades later, I return on a June Sunday,

driven along that road, now a slower visitor
come to worship, to savour my Quaker roots.
We park near the same enduring stone wall,
its surface a prayer-lined path, moss-quiet,
and walk indoors, into the rich green silence.