

1994

A People of Vision

Paul N. Anderson

George Fox University, panderso@georgefox.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Paul N., "A People of Vision" (1994). *Faculty Publications - College of Christian Studies*. 308.
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs/308>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Christian Studies at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - College of Christian Studies by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.



a people of vision

BY PAUL ANDERSON

IT IS AN absolute delight to worship and serve among a people of vision. Evangelical Quakers attempt great things for God because we continually ask the question: "What would God have us do?" And a great deal gets done because people earnestly desire to follow God's leadings and further His work in the world. That's an inspiration!

On the other hand, great ventures require great commitments of time, energy, and resources. At a recent board meeting someone bemoaned the many obligations our yearly meeting seemed to have—far more than other Christian groups our size. As I thought about that fact, I began to sense another feeling welling up inside: joyous gratitude. I feel grateful to be called by God to serve among others who are also living out their callings within a larger family of faith.

Think of it. Within the five EFI (North America) yearly meetings alone we have nearly 300 churches, four colleges, three graduate programs in ministry, numerous Christian schools and day-cares, nearly a dozen camps, missionary ventures in five continents, inner-city ministries, a printing press/publishing house, five yearly meeting headquarter sites—not to mention numerous outreach ventures in evangelism, music, art, drama, puppets, disaster relief, humanitarian aid—and a wonderful magazine. It's absolutely amazing that a group of only about 30,000 has been able to accomplish this much.

Explanation? In each of these cases, someone caught a vision from the Lord about something that needed to be done, and was able to share that vision in ways that met needs and generated sup-

port. Vision *always* precedes support. The most important question is always, "What does God desire us to do?" When that question becomes settled, the means and guidance to accomplish the answer will always be granted. On the other hand, when ministries achieve their purposes and are no longer needed, they may also be released with a sense of joy. It is far more difficult to know when to lay down a ministry than to know when to take one up. But God leads in these matters too, and we can trust Him.

"What
does God
desire
us to do?"

Here's where stewardship comes in. For the committed Christian, *all* of what we have and are belongs to God. Our resources, our talents, our time, our energies and money—they are all God's. The steward's calling becomes seeking to cultivate and utilize all of one's resources for the glory of God and the furthering of His government. That's why we serve, and that's why we give.

I sincerely enjoyed my years in the pastorate, but now my primary service

is as a full-time college teacher of biblical studies. I may have some pastoral skills, but I don't have the time or energy left over to serve a congregation well. And yet I want that work to be done and I want to support it. Likewise, I want the Gospel to be spread to other lands, but I cannot go, even though I was raised in Latin America and speak Spanish fluently. So I am delighted to support missionaries who are called to go and to serve. Being part of a larger ministering group means that each of us is called to support the ministries of the larger group and individuals in it as well.

An ironic complication, however, is that so many of our members have dedicated their lives to service endeavors and professions that very few have the means to subsidize more than a portion of a particular ministry. Until the Lord prospers more of us in ways uncommon (may this transpire prolifically!), or until we find ways to do things more efficiently, the invitation to support one another will continue to be a common calling. It punctuates our joyous service among a people of vision and allows us to share in the visions that God has so richly imparted to others.

The invitation to Christian stewardship is not a factor of perceived obligation. It is the result of dwelling among a people of vision—and of becoming one with them ourselves. ■

About This Issue: In this issue we address significant aspects of Christian stewardship from several angles.

Young people, take note of the 1994 youth essay competition announcement. This year's theme is "Following Jesus," and essays are due April 16.