



# PENDLE HILL

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To: Friends Everywhere

From: Walter Hjelt Sullivan  
Director of Education Programs  
Dean of Students  
Pendle Hill, Quaker Adult Study Center  
Wallingford, PA

Re: Jon Watts

Date: September 6, 2008

I am writing in support of the ministry of Jon Watts, musician, performer and seasoned young adult Friend.

I first met Jon in September of 2006 when he became a student in the Resident Program here at Pendle Hill. I served as Jon's spiritual nurturer, meeting together for an hour once a week for the entire year, exploring questions of faithfulness, spiritual growth, and the nature of his ministry with young people, music, and the Religious Society of Friends.

We talked mostly about Jon's spiritual journey, the deepening of his understanding and commitment to his Quaker faith during his senior year at Guilford, and his ministry to call others – particularly, but not exclusively, Young Friends – to hear the deeper message that Quakerism has for today's world

Although Jon was one of the youngest members of a student community that ranged from their early twenties to nearly eighty, he was nominated by a committee of his peers to serve as clerk of our bi-monthly community meetings. He served the community well, with wisdom and humor. His ability to sense the condition of the group, his commitment to honor the truth of the unheard voices, and his blending of seriousness and joy were among the many gifts which he gave to us.

During his year at Pendle Hill, Jon wrote, performed and recorded a CD of spiritually-inspired songs – "The Art of Fully Being," released in March of 2007. Jon's music is young and current, rap-inspired, deeply intimate and profoundly spiritual. It explores questions of faith and faithfulness, growing up Quaker, the environmental crisis, war, and peace.

Jon came into adulthood as part of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, where he and many other Young Friends met and came to admire Tom Fox as a Friendly Adult Presence and a wise and quiet adult who respected young people. Jon's song about the life and death of Tom Fox, "There's a Spirit in Iraq," stirs my heart, challenges my soul, and calls upon me to listen carefully to the message of Tom's life for my own.

I have watched Jon perform a half dozen times at Pendle Hill as well as at the Friends General Conference Gathering this past summer. Jon is a skillful and perceptive performer. His performances take on the flavor of a Meeting for Worship. It is clear to me that Jon both prepares the play list to create that atmosphere and listens carefully to follow the leadings of the Spirit in the moment.

What I appreciate most about Jon and his ministry is the honesty, sincerity, and transparency of his journey. He continuously seeks to be faithful – to find the true message that has been given to him. He is a young Quaker man, growing in his ministry. One of the messages that I have taken from Jon's life and his work is to look honestly within, be faithful to what you see, another step will be given.

I encourage Friends and Friends Meetings to support Jon in his work. Sponsor his travels. Listen to his music. Have a heap of fun. Be challenged into the art of fully being. There is a Spirit in this man.