

# Three Windows Three Women

## Transitions

*María Paff, 26  
Chicago, Illinois*



When I think of transition, I think of moving out of one phase or state into another. This is one thing that I believe everyone has in common because we all will encounter transition at some point in our lives.

While I definitely experienced growth in my life in various forms when I transitioned from high school to college, my most significant change came after college. I went into the Mennonite Voluntary Service program in Chicago, and as someone coming from small town rural America, I found Chicago to be one eye-opening experience after another.

After Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS), I found myself again asking, “What next?” For me, this was perhaps my hardest transition. For a long time, I had felt as though I was always part of a strong community. I came from a small town and was raised in a wonderful family. College felt like an extension of that, as did MVS.

But finding myself stepping into the “real world” was hard. I had a college degree, but I was not sure what the next right decision was. I needed to find a place to live, pay the bills, make new friends. I definitely had times when I felt alone and disconnected—unprepared for the so-called “real world.” However, I learned about myself during this time; I drew on my gifts and the strengths of others, and I ended up being a more well-rounded individual as a result.

With new changes come new experiences and new opportunities for growth. Though change can be difficult to handle, it can also be a door into something new. By God’s grace, we can awaken each day to a new experience, and rather than seeing it as a stumbling block, we can embrace it and become stronger, more confident individuals. 📖

*Editor’s note:*

*This column is a forum for women to share perspectives on the current issue’s theme. It introduces women spanning their 20’s–30’s, 40’s–50’s, and 60’s and above. If you are interested in writing for this column, please contact the editor at [PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org](mailto:PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org).*

*Laurie Oswald Robinson, 49*  
*Newton, Kansas*



Transition in my life usually follows what is called a “tipping point.” That’s when a slow, gradual change becomes irreversible and proceeds with gathering pace. Rarely do my transitions follow a quick, volcanic eruption, such as a tragedy or a reversal in a relationship. More often, they happen when changes in my life gather steam and bring me to a juncture of choice. I can take the road that veers off into new directions that are scary. I can ride the river that is flowing at a pace that stretches my abilities to navigate. Or, I can refuse to accept the new direction my life is taking and stop in my tracks. Acceptance and flexibility mean growth; rigidity and stubbornness mean stagnation.

Tipping points can make me feel out of control. When situations begin changing, I fear being pushed over the edge of my ability to cope. But God’s gifts are hidden within these transitions. For example, for years, I periodically wrote devotionals for *Rejoice!* magazine; I wrote reams of poetry but kept it hidden in my journals. Though family had encouraged me to write a book, I had shied away from that venture—fearing risk and wider exposure. And then one day, Carol Duerksen, author and publisher, invited me to consider writing a devotional book with her and Michele Hershberger, Bible Professor at Hesston College. The invitation caused a tipping point that appeared to be jarring and sudden. But it simply followed the flow my life had taken for decades. I could choose to allow more of my writings to see the light of day and hopefully bless others, or I could tighten up and refuse to grow and stretch.

I accepted her invitation. And the change from being a writer for magazines and newspapers to also becoming a co-author of a book was deeply gratifying. Countless times God has sneaked incremental changes into my life that lead to a tipping point. And then I find myself peering over a new cliff edge, challenged again to trust and jump. When I go with God, the free fall never fails to land me on solid ground. 📖

*Jocele Meyer, 80*  
*Fresno, Ohio*



Some transitions in my life have been obvious and some so gradual they have scarcely been noticed until I looked back on them.

A significant time of transition began when our family moved from rural to urban living when my husband studied for a year at the state university. We moved 50 miles from a small town in a rural setting to the state capital with our three children. This was a relatively smooth transition since we had often gone to this city for sightseeing and shopping. We returned frequently to our former home to visit family and friends.

Then, my husband accepted a teaching position in the largest city of our state. This change was more pronounced as we were farther from family, and we lived in a multi-cultural neighborhood in the midst of busy traffic, humming industry, with a variety of new customs. The move was eased when we began attending a newly planted Mennonite Church pastored by college friends who shared hospitality with our family and introduced us to city life.

Our children quickly adjusted to more structured play areas and new friends at school. We enjoyed the opportunities to visit museums, attend orchestra concerts, sporting events, etc. I learned to navigate through city traffic and use mass transit.

Next, after 23 years of urban living my husband and I accepted a position with MCC. We found the move overseas easier because of our earlier transitions. New cultures and customs were less threatening. Having made these large transitions has made it easier to accept changes in all areas of my life.

Now that I have returned to a rural setting, I'm thankful for having lived in a variety of locations. Learning new ways in various places, making friends with those having diverse interests, and worshiping with a variety of believers all provide me with a wealth of rich memories.

These words from a prayer, "Be at Peace," by St. Frances de Sales from the Jan. 2008 issue of *Salt of the Earth*, a newsletter of the St. Francis de Sales Society, express my feelings about transitions:

Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life; rather look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things.... 