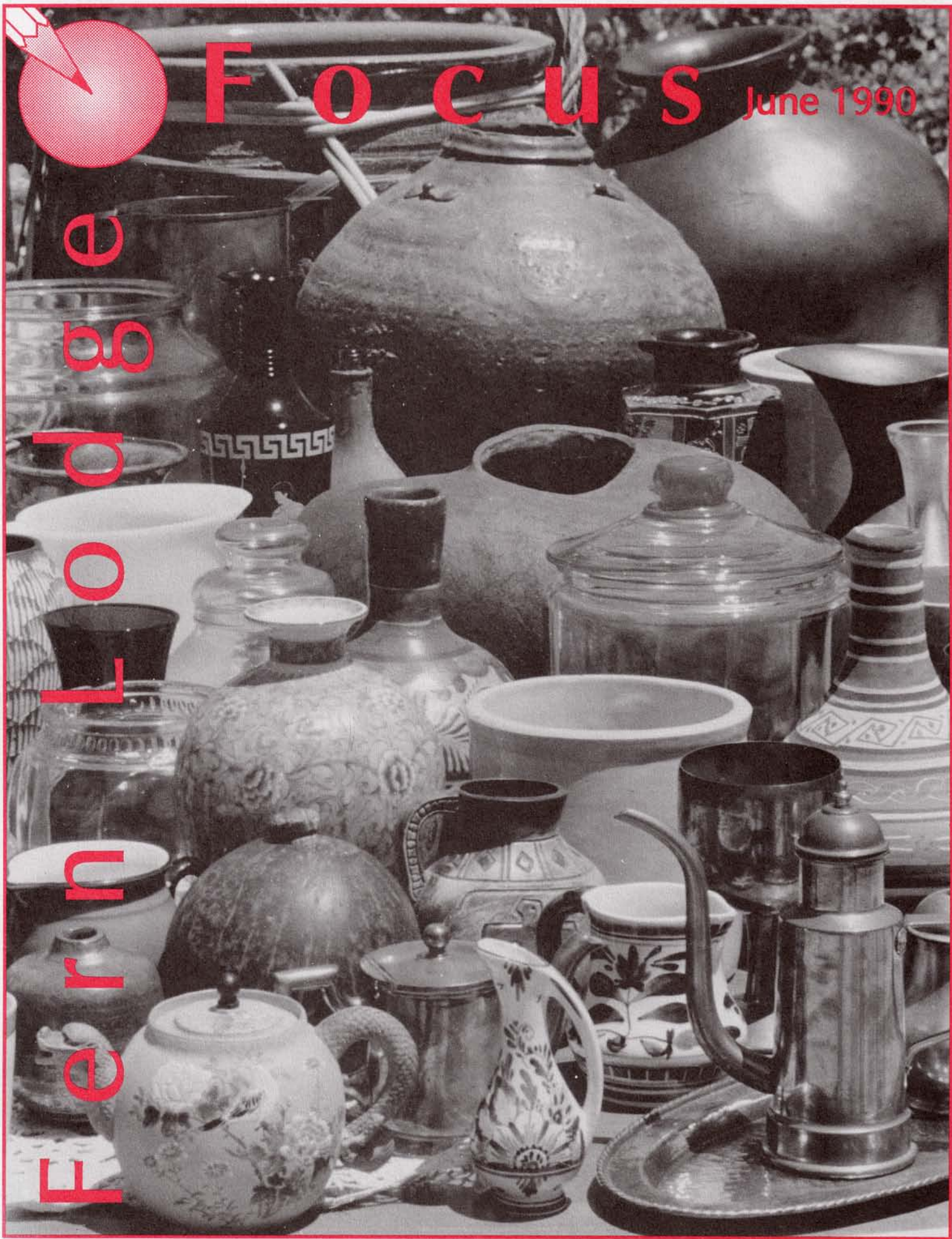


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Elisha, The Woman, And Her Borrowed Pots

In the *Bible* there is an account of God's abundant provision for a woman and her family, supplied when she turned to Elisha for help. The story comforts us at Fern Lodge, because it shows how natural it is for neighbors to help each other.

The Story

The book of II Kings¹ tells of *a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets*, whose husband had died, leaving her in debt and in danger of losing her sons to creditors. A little research² revealed this woman's husband was Obadiah, the king's steward. He had borrowed money to feed the prophets of God, in hiding from followers of Baal, who sought to kill them.³ The widow's plight seemed to result from her family's service to God.

She sought Elisha's help. He asked, *What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house?* She replied she had nothing but a pot of oil. That presented no problem to Elisha. He showed her how to let her one resource multiply through the grace of God, and provide income both to pay her debt and to support her and her sons.

First an act of faith was required. Elisha told the woman, *borrow vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels, borrow not a few.* To fulfill her trust that God would supply her need, she needed to go to her neighbors and trust they would help her.

The neighbors gave their empty vessels. The woman poured oil from her pot into the borrowed vessels, and there was enough to fill every one. The amount of oil available was exactly as much as was needed to fill the borrowed vessels. The man of God then told her to sell the oil, pay her debt, and provide for her family.

Think of the importance of the woman's neighbors to her demonstration of supply. Had she been unwilling to seek their aid, she would not have seen God's abundance.

Our Story

Those who rely on Christian Science now are like the prophets and their families of Elisha's time. They proclaim their devotion to God, Spirit, in the face of the materialism of today. They trust in His grace for salvation, for health and for meeting daily needs.

These people encounter sickness, temptation, antagonism, even persecution. Yet turning to God they find spiritual regeneration, and usually quick, decisive healing.

But sometimes the demands of a material body and world seem to require more than they can bear; they feel unable to fulfill their obligations — just like the widow woman in our Bible story. But they have a pot of oil of their own; they have *consecration; charity; gentleness; prayer; heavenly inspiration*, as Mrs. Eddy's defines *oil* in the glossary of our textbook.⁴

In times of need Christian Scientists can turn to their neighbors, their fellow-Christians who are, as Paul wrote in his letter to Timothy, *vessel(s) unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*⁵

These people may be friends and fellow church members, Christian Science practitioners and nurses.

Sometimes we at Fern Lodge feel like the woman who asked Elisha for aid. As in the widow's case, it is tempting to believe an apparent lack of resources accom-

panies our service to God and to our fellow-man in sheltering those unable to pay for nursing care. We must look with the eyes of a prophet, a spiritual seer, to recognize that each of us has the consecration, charity and prayer to supply the need.

Then we may go to our neighbors in the field and ask for specific help to realize the spiritual coincidence of demand and supply. Whenever we call, our friends demonstrate their readiness to help in support of those who need Christian Science nursing. We are glad for your gracious encouragement and your willingness to give of what you have to bless others.

There are many times when we are a neighbor giving of what we have to help those in need. Christian Science nursing, and the financial aid that may accompany it, are our neighborly response to those who seek help. A Christian Science nurse is *a vessel ... prepared unto every good work*. Nursing supports and encourages reliance on God for healing, and so allows for an abundant flow of the oil Mrs. Eddy speaks of.

Our understanding of Fern Lodge's role in the community is expanding. Supported by new accreditation standards from The Mother Church, we are preparing to respond more effectively as the widow woman's neighbors did. Working closely with the Bay Area visiting nurses, we strive to minimize institutional nursing. When someone calls with a need, we first try to assist the person in his home, with his family. Fern Lodge will give home nursing as our staff is able. With your participation more can be done.

New Neighbors New Pots

We can be neighbors together. We all can be vessels *meet for the master's use*, ready to supply another's need. If you are willing to serve by offering in-home aid to another — aid of any kind — please let us know so we can put you in touch with those who ask for assistance. Some who call us just need a helping hand around the house, not the service of a trained nurse.

The Benevolence Fund for Care has as its long-range goal giving financial aid without requiring people to come to the facility first. Response to our last *Focus* indicates strong support for this kind of benevolence assistance. Your readiness to be a neighbor will help us to reach the goal.

Gifts will be used to provide care and nursing services to those at Fern Lodge now, and to those at home as soon as sufficient funds are available. If you have any questions about how you can contribute, please contact us. Thank you for your continued interest and encouragement.

¹ *II Kings* 4:1-7

² *Antiquities IX* 4:2, Josephus

³ *I Kings* 18:3, 14

⁴ *Science and Health*, 592:25

⁵ *II Timothy* 2:21



Wanted: Volunteer Vessels

Be a vital part of our Christly healing mission.

As our cover picture indicates, vessels come in varying shapes and sizes. Each of you is a unique vessel, and you can be "meet for the master's use and prepared unto every good work" (*II Tim 2:20*). Here are examples of what you can bring to Fern Lodge:

- Reading to patients
- Playing an instrument
- Sharing the adventures of a trip
- Talking about a hobby or interest
- Sharing a craft project
- Joining us for a party or outing (Patriot's party in July; Hawaiian party in August)

Some people have given painting and cake decorating demonstrations for our patients. A veteran doll collector came to show and talk about her antique collection.

Join us for 6 months as we pray for greater vision and fresh views on the topics listed below.

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|-------------|-------------|
| • July | Purpose |
| • August | Agelessness |
| • September | Restoration |
| • October | Eternality |
| • November | New Birth |
| • December | Renewal |

Let us know what you discover in your search. You may wish to ask a friend to join you. Or you may form a support group. Support groups help us focus on the Christian Science nursing work at Fern Lodge. They meet regularly, perhaps monthly, and form a valuable link to local communities. These people can greatly improve our communications with the field, correcting misconceptions and clarifying the role of nursing in the lives of church members.

We have local Fern Lodge Support Groups in Berkeley and in Walnut Creek. We also have devoted people half way across the country giving regular metaphysical support to our Development Committee. Distance is no obstacle in this outreach.

I constantly remind myself in Activity work that the oil is already provided by Mind; God is the great provider and enabler. Your vessel, already full by reflection, will be welcomed.

Evelyn Spelman,
Activities Director

