

Underground

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*A tree is not a forest. On its own, a tree cannot establish a consistent local climate. It is at the mercy of wind and weather.
But together, many trees . . .*

—Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees*,
translated by Jane Billingham

Friends, Meeting. Twenty or thirty of us.
Taking your seat you could mistake us for
twenty or thirty travelers on a bus,

a London tube, an Amtrak car. Unless
you still prefer—need—to help your neighbor.
Friends Meeting. Twenty or so of us.

Chatty wren. Never been told, I guess,
filibustering's not exactly kosher.
Twenty or thirty riders on a bus,

each unique with a common focus.
Taking a seat you could believe we were
a Quaker Meeting. Maybe thirty of us.

The Pope would fit right in. He's one of us,
finding the face of God everywhere.
Twenty or thirty mortals on a bus.

Roots, we are learning, have an urge to nourish
their neighborhood. Find and feed each other.
Twenty or thirty people on a bus.
Friends Meeting. Couple dozen of us.