

Friendly Notes

Santa Monica Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

January, 2016

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Upcoming Events:

- ♦ Jan. 17, 2016; 8:30 a.m.: Adult Education: Kim O'Brien leads discussion about David Johnson's [A Quaker Prayer Life](#)
- ♦ Feb. 7, 2016; Noon; Adult Education: Steve Smith: Reading from [Eastern Light](#)
- ♦ March 19, 2016 (Saturday, 9:00-4:00): Adult Education: Diego Navarro, incoming PYM Clerk, leads workshop "Living Our Lives in Worship"



Advices and Queries — Living our Faith

Queries

What 'living truths' do I hold? How does the way I live my life reflect these truths?

Advices

We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other...but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace and unity with God and with one another, that these things may abound. *Edward Burrough, 1659.*

George Fox call Quakerism an "experimental" faith. Today, Friends are more likely to call it "experiential," and this in turn implies willingness to consider new insights and perceptions... Testimonies bear witness to the Truth as Friends in community perceive it: Truth known through relationship with God. Testimonies are expressions of lives turned toward the Light, outward expressions that reflect the inward experi-

ence of divine guidance. *Pacific Yearly Meeting*

The word 'testimony' is used by Quakers to describe a witness to the living truth within the human heart as it is acted out in everyday life. It is not a form of words, but a mode of life based on the realization that there is that of God in everybody, that all human beings are equal, that all life is interconnected. It is affirmative but may lead to action that runs counter to certain practices currently accepted in society at large...These testimonies reflect the corporate beliefs of the Society, however much individual Quakers may interpret them differently according to their own light. They are not optional extras, but fruits that grow from the very tree of faith. *Harvey Gillman, 1988*

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life. *1.02 British F&P*

Contributions to Friendly Notes

Friendly Notes welcomes submissions by Friends. A quotation, poem or short essay that speaks to you in your spiritual journey, or something that you have written yourself, can enrich others seeking the Light. Please give a copy to the Editor, Friendly Notes, by email (rebeccatillberg@yahoo.com) or in written form at Meeting.



Minutes - December 13, 2015

Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business

Attending: Rachel Fretz, Richard Shaw, Bob Tajima, Curtis Raynor, Fred Buell, Cathleen Loeser, Donna Cooper, Jan Bartholomew, Grayson Schick, Nadia Zorin, Shelley Blank, Kim O'Brien, Brian Johnston, Henry Yang, JoAnn Taylor, Wendy Christensen, Celia Carroll, Cindy Waite, Grant Ramey, Stan Searl, Ann Fuller

Meeting began in silent worship on queries on simplicity. Friends spoke to persisting in Quaker simplicity in the midst of American culture which counts worth in what we own rather than how we live our lives; and the importance of distinguishing what we want from what we need. Rather than simplicity being seen as deprivation, a Friend sees an inner richness from which simplicity naturally flows. The third query, "How can I be more thoughtful about what I need and what I acquire?" was seen by one Friend as the central issue of our time.

Worship and Ministry – Rachel Fretz read and distributed the proposed charge of the committee. Rachel related the history of the committee, which was divided into Pastoral Care and Worship and Ministry when deeper long-term issues began to be buried by more immediate issues. Pastoral Care is charged with overseeing the welfare of individual Friends. She noted that the clerk of Pastoral Care and the meeting clerk attend meetings of Worship and Ministry. A Friend recalled the work of W&M in centering the meeting during a time when the meeting had become unfocused, through retreats and Adult Education sessions.

The clerk called for silent worship.

12-15-01 Meeting approves the following charge of the Worship and Ministry Committee.

Worship & Ministry Committee Description Santa Monica Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Overall, the committee engages in discernment about the corporate life of the Santa Monica Quaker community. This committee nurtures ways to promote the spiritual health of the community, with particular attention to deepening the spiritual power of the Meeting for Worship. The committee encourages committee work, education and social action to be reflections about our worship together, where we use Quaker process, open to listening for Divine Guidance.

- The committee encourages Friends to become aware of the power of a gathered Meeting for Worship, where the presence of the Divine Spirit is real, in what Howard Brinton named as a Quaker form of group mysticism.
- The committee prays for a deepening of the worship silence so that Friends can become vessels of the Spirit.
- This committee oversees the preparation of the annual State of the Meeting report and presents it to the Meeting community.
- We nurture the Meeting for Worship upon the occasion of Business by attending and being prayerfully open, waiting on the Spirit together.
- We work supportively with the Clerk of the Meeting to develop his or her skills of discernment in order to live in a beloved community.
- We oversee the functioning of committees and pay attention to how committees engage in a Quaker process of decision making.

Ad Hoc Lease Committee – Richard Shaw read and distributed two minutes. In response to a Friend's question about the relationship of The Activity Place's proposed rental and Quaker testimonies, Rick noted that our meeting finances would be simplified, and the building would be maintained for future Quakers, and that their philosophy respects the integrity of the children, and is peaceful, and that the local community and our values would be served by providing space for a needed educational facility.

Several Friends found the last sentence, referring to a "long and fruitful relationship" to be premature, and Rick clarified that it had been written several months ago, when it seemed that Maria and Shaun might need some reassurance of our serious interest in their proposal. Friends expressed appreciation for the work of the ad hoc committee, and for taking the time for us to work together.

12-15-02 Meeting approves the following statement:

In September of 2015, Santa Monica Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends approved a minute to sign a Letter of Intent with The Activity Place to develop a Lease Agreement under which the Activity Place would operate a pre-school and/or daycare center on the premises during weekdays. This is an opportunity for partnership in which we would be the host site, and The Activity Place would operate the school.

Meeting affirms both the aspirations and roots of our decision. This project is compatible with the Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community and Equality. The Meeting's decision to be the host site is rooted in its spiritual beliefs and a desire for good stewardship of our facility. Quakers have historically valued service as part of their practice. Quakers have also valued education, as evidenced in the many places of learning initiated by Friends.

Meeting affirms that the Ad Hoc Committee will work cooperatively and attentively with The Activity Place.

Peace and Social Action – Brian Johnston reported that the committee meetings have been well attended and spirit led. They are working through tension between urgent short-term issues and longer-term issues. The sub-

committee on Poverty has been meeting and has been re-focused as the Sub-Committee on Inequality and Wealth.

Pastoral Care – Cathleen Loeser brought forward Jan Bartholomew for membership. While a Friend accompanied her out of the room, Friends spoke to her groundedness and value to the meeting.

12-15-03 Meeting approves Jan Bartholomew for membership.

Cathleen brought forward Cristine Reynaert for membership, to be held over for the next meeting for business. Her clearness committee spoke to the deep spiritual experience of meeting with her. Any concerns can be brought to the committee members, Ann Fuller, Stan Searl, Cathleen Loeser and Curtis Raynor.

Nominating Committee – Stan Searl brought forward Judith Searle for the Sandwich Making Committee, for final approval.

12-15-04 Meeting approves Judith Searle on Sandwich Making Committee.

Finance Committee – Rick Shaw urged Friends to make their end of year contributions soon, and noted that committee's efforts to lessen expenses has helped our financial situation.

Alternatives to Violence Program – Curtis Raynor reported that AVP-LA met last week at the meeting-house and was well attended, including four returned citizens who have become facilitators; one lifer who was released 100 days ago speaks of his life having been changed through AVP. AVP forms communities, inside and outside prisons, of very disparate people. A Friend suggested an Adult Education session to familiarize Friends with AVP's work.

Minutes from the November 15, 2015 meeting for business were read and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Stan Searl, Acting Clerk

Ann Fuller, Recording Clerk



Alice Herman Committee Meeting Enrichment Grants

Volunteering in Kenya

A Report by Gretchen Woelffle about
Her Work in Kenya, Supported by an
AHC Grant

In October, 2015 I traveled to Kenya for two weeks to work with the medical group Preventing Cervical Cancer. Many thanks to the Alice Herman Committee for a partial grant to cover my expenses.

People have adopted a solemn tone when asking me about my recent volunteer work in Kenya with Preventing Cervical Cancer (www.PINCC.org). They tend to be surprised when I say, "It was really fun!" I think they expected "difficult" or "eye-opening" or "inspiring." But overall, it was great fun.

I traveled to West Africa several years ago, giving author talks at international schools in three countries. I'd met many interesting ex-pats, but few Africans. This time I wanted to connect with the local people. The PINCC project seemed just the ticket. The fact that we were not a group of foreign experts coming in and taking over, but training the resident staff to run their own treatment programs also appealed to me.

It was a novelty for non-medical me to work with a great team of American doctors and nurses for two weeks in two hospitals in western Kenya. I watched them teach their African colleagues to screen for cervical cancer and treat abnormal results. I supplied and checked all the curious bits and pieces they needed each day in the examination rooms, and I even viewed a few cervixes myself.

But best of all were my interactions with patients: interviewing the English-speaking women who came for screening – usually for the first time – and comforting them during their exams and treatments. With illustrated

charts I explained to patients about HPV (human papillomavirus) and how cervical cancer can be prevented. I learned the women's results when I entered the data into our computer.

Getting a glimpse of Kenyan village life, walking down lanes past small homesteads in the evenings while attracting a Pied Piper-esque entourage of children, seeing the local medical staff beam as they received their PINCC certifications to continue their work after we left – was all part of the fun.

Another delight: I spent two evenings speaking to several groups of children at the Catholic compound in Nyabondo, with its hospital, nursing school, two boarding schools, a day school, and a home for disabled children. Two overflowing classrooms of girls listened enthusiastically as I talked about my work as a children's author. After I read my latest book, *Mumbet's Declaration of Independence*, about an 18th century Massachusetts slave who won her freedom, they had lively comments and questions. And I was mobbed in a most friendly way when I stood among them for a photo op. The next evening I gave a similar presentation to a group of ten lovely disabled boys.

Yes, Kenya with PINCC was eye-opening and inspiring, and occasionally difficult, but the pure pleasure of the adventure surprised and delighted me.

Note: Preventing Cervical Cancer, a non-profit in Oakland, California, has been working in Latin America, Africa, and India since 2005. Volunteers travel to each site three times, six months apart, after which local staff are certified to conduct their own treatment and training programs. At present the group is running projects in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. For more information see www.pincc.org

Poetry as Ministry Project

A Leading Supported to the Santa Monica Friends Meeting

A Report to the Monthly Meeting

With this project, the Santa Monica Monthly Meeting has reinstated a traditional Quaker discernment process to support leadings. Drawing upon “Faithfulness in Action: Supporting Leadings in the Pacific Yearly Meeting,” Santa Monica Meeting has designated that member, Stanford J. Searl, Jr., travels broadly under the concern for a ministry of Quaker poetry and the Meeting has stipulated a number of steps about this leading.

1. The Worship & Ministry Committee identified this leading through a clearness process and established an ongoing Oversight Committee (Clerked by Rachel Fretz) to support and nurture this Poetry as Ministry Project.
2. In September, 2014, the Monthly Meeting approved a traveling minute that said the member, Stanford J. Searl, Jr. “is traveling under a concern for a ministry of Quaker poetry, offering a worship sharing approach to deepening the practices of Quaker spirituality.”
3. Under the care of the Oversight Committee, this poetry as ministry project completed four presentations during 2015, including one on Sunday, March 15th at Claremont Meeting and another at Orange County Meeting on Sunday, September 20th with Cynthia Cuza as elder at both sessions and one at Inland Valley Meeting on Sunday, October 25th with Joann Taylor as elder. At Claremont, about 17 people attended; at Orange County, we had 18 people attend and 8 Friends attended at Inland Valley. With Cynthia Cuza as elder, we presented at La Jolla Friends Meeting on Saturday, November 14th and had about 12 people.

Overall, we used the following approach to the poetry as ministry sessions:

1. We tried to take our time, be deliberative and medita-

tive, allowing a centered quality to emerge. Thus, we started with brief worship and proceeded at a slow, listening pace, open to reflections and reactions after each of four sections from the book, *Quaker Poems: The Heart Opened*.

2. After the initial sessions, we gave copies of the book to everyone present, thinking that it might be hard to follow poems if they were only oral. People could simply keep the books or pay whatever they wished and Stan signed each copy if people wished this.
3. We shared the reading of the poems, with each of us bringing out own approach to the content, tone and voice in the poems.
4. When the sessions were on a Sunday, we attended the regular worship and this seemed to have an indirect, yet powerful value.
5. There has been growing clarity about the ministry part and this might emerge more fully. Also, we might give more attention to the role of an elder.
6. We started and ended the sessions with brief silent worship.

We think that presenting these Quaker poems offers a form of ministry because

1. It’s about being used by the Spirit as a vehicle or conduit, a bridge between the poet/speaker and the Divine (Spirit, Seed, Presence or no name whatever). The speaker/poet enacts a Quaker role here, one in which he or she is played upon by the Spirit.
2. The poems keep breaking into songs and hymns, sort of running together, making a kind of music or referring to music and song. As one Quaker said, these songs represent a gift from the Divine in some ways.
3. The poems illustrate how the spiritually prepared heart – a metaphor for mind/body/soul as an integrated whole – matters and the poems offer multiple illustrations about what this means.

Elders and Poetry as Ministry

An elder is a spiritual companion who accompanies this ministry. This means a Friend whose main role is to listen to the Inner Teacher and urge us to do the same, open to the Spirit, waiting for and listening to Divine Guidance.

This accompaniment urges us to be faithful to one’s Inner

Guide, open to the music of the poems through the lens of spiritual guidance. Thus, it may involve prayer, silent or vocal, trying to discern the Divine will in the moment.

The point of being an accompanying elder means a focus upon obedience to the Divine urgings and taking seriously the admonition of “not my will but thine oh Lord”; see *Tall Poppies*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #347 by Marty Grundy.

Santa Monica Monthly Meeting

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<https://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/santa-monica-friends-meeting>



**WALK CHEERFULLY OVER THE EARTH ANSWERING THAT OF
GOD IN EVERYONE. -George Fox**

Contributions to the Meeting

While the Meeting values everyone's contributions of time and energy, it also depends on financial contributions to support its many activities. Please give what you can.

Please make sure your name and street address are on your check, and mark it as 'Donation.'

You may also drop checks in the contributions box in the library area. If you wish to contribute by automatic deposit, please contact the Clerk of Finance Committee.

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