

Tenth Month, 2017

# QUAKER NEWSLETTER

GAINESVILLE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS  
702 NW 38th Street, Gainesville, FL 32607; (352) 372-1070

[www.gainesvillequakers.org](http://www.gainesvillequakers.org)

Sandy Lyon, clerk

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*There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.*

*Nelson Mandela*

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**Hold in the Light:** Hap Taylor, Anne and Phil Haisley, Connie and Tim Ray, Arnold and Amy Von der Porten.

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**Calendar of Events:** (online at [www.gainesvillequakers.org](http://www.gainesvillequakers.org))

Every Sunday: 11:00 am Meeting for Worship; 11:15 am First Day School

Every Monday: 5:30 pm Yoga with Gary

Every Monday: 7:30 pm Candlelight Witness at Bo Diddley Plaza to Support Immigrant Justice

**Sunday, October 1**

9:30 am Library committee

9:30 am Meetinghouse committee

**Tuesday, October 3**

12:00 pm Friendly Lunch - at the Meeting House NOTE TIME CHANGE

**Sunday, October 8**

12:45 pm Meeting for Worship for Business

**Sunday, October 15**

9:45 am Earthcare Witness Committee

**Wednesday, October 18**

Deadline for newsletter items. Email to Bonnie Zimmer at [gfquakernews@gmail.com](mailto:gfquakernews@gmail.com)

**Saturday, October 21**

Pride Festival – Bo Diddley Plaza

**Sunday, October 22**

9:40 am Peace and Social Concerns Committee

1:00 pm Bible Study

**Sunday, October 29**

Visitation Sunday



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Friends are reminded that it is the responsibility of the entire community to assist with cleaning up the kitchen area after the social hour.

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**Friendly Lunch**

The time for Friendly Lunch has been changed to **NOON**. It will still be on the first Tuesday of the month.

**SEYM Fall Interim Business Meeting**

The SEYM Fall Interim Business Meeting will be held at the Sarasota Meetinghouse on Saturday, October 7. The Executive Committee will meet Friday night. Further details are available on the SEYM website.

## Summary of September Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

The memberships of Don Smith and Irene McReynolds were approved with joy. A welcoming party will be planned by the Ministry and Nurture Committee.

There was a discussion of the various items around the Meetinghouse that need to be attended to, primarily as a result of Hurricane Irma. A work day was scheduled for September 30 to do some of this work.

The Ministry and Nurture Committee plans to open the Meetinghouse as a 'Safe Space' during the evening of October 19, 2017. There will be a continuous Meeting for Worship during those hours. Richard Spencer is expected to be holding a rally downtown. Numerous faith communities are creating similar 'Safe Spaces' for those who do not want to be present downtown.

## Pride Festival

As is our custom, we will have a booth at the Pride Festival on October 21. We need Friends who are able to set up the table, be present during the Festival to talk to people and take down the table at the end of the day. This year we have rented a table and 2 chairs from the organizers so we don't have to carry them, but we **DO** need people. **If anyone has a pop-up shade tent, that would be very useful.**

## Beltram Peace Center News

Some years ago several members of Gainesville Monthly Meeting helped create the Beltram Peace Center (originally called The Gainesville Interfaith Peace Center), and twice the meeting has passed a minute affirming its unity with the Peace Center's programs. For four or five years Don Smith has been facilitating two groups there, which have been attended by various meeting members.

- The first of these, which meets on the second and fourth Wednesday evenings of each month, goes under the title of *Dismantling Racism*. So far it has studied Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Color Blindness* and Ibrim Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning: A History of Racist Ideas in America*, as well as numerous poems, short stories and essays by African-American writers. The series resumed on September 13 with a discussion of Langston Hughes's poem, "*Let America Be America Again*." It will continue with selections from an anthology titled *Black Voices* while considering the possibility of researching Gainesville's own history with racism.
- The second is an interfaith dialogue, mainly between Christians and Muslims, but which has also included Jews, Hindus and even skeptics. In addition to delving into the Bible and the Qu'ran, the group has studied secondary sources that compare the tenets of both faiths. For the time being, the conversation will continue around short essays in a book titled *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*.

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee encourages meeting members to attend these sessions, both for their own edification and to support the Peace Center's ongoing ministry. The Peace Center shares a building with the Mennonite Church at 1236 NW 18th Ave. Sessions begin at 7pm and 10am, respectively. These groups appear on the Meeting Calendar on our website.

## Quaker Organizations

(From time to time we provide information on various Quaker organizations. Some of them are financially supported by the Meeting; others are not. This month we are providing information on a European organization that is doing interesting advocacy work.)

## Quaker Council for European Affairs (qcea.org)

Following a review of activities in 2015–16, Quaker Council for European Affairs has restructured to focus on peace and human rights. QCEA has also incorporated "quiet diplomacy" into its policy work, providing a safe place for discussion for those who make or influence policy.

QCEA events encourage participants to see the value in all people, to rethink security, and to focus upon a particular policy agenda. The meetings also broaden the range of voices interacting with policymakers on peace and human rights issues, convening people that would not otherwise normally meet.

QCEA, together with the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN), has recently published a report on Friends' efforts to respond to the influx of displaced persons in Europe. The report, "Quaker Faith in Action: Friends' work in the area of forced migration," builds on feedback from

Quaker respondents across Europe, and explores the important work done by individuals, meetings, and organizations in response to this unprecedented humanitarian challenge.

Quaker House in Brussels, Belgium, where QCEA is based, is also increasingly acting as a community space. An asylum seeker-led project has worked with QCEA to host fundraisers in support of displaced persons. The QCEA offices also host the European Network Against Arms Trade and Nonviolent Peaceforce, providing valuable links with other peace organizations.

### Update on Sanctuary

Bonnie Zimmer and Peter Harrell attended the Sanctuary planning meeting the third week in September. The background of the need for sanctuary was outlined as well as the legal steps that are underway.

The building space is in the process of being prepared. Monetary donations are needed as well as 'big ticket' items such as a stove. Work days are held in the afternoon on weekends for cleaning, removal of debris, repairs, and eventually painting, etc. Help is needed for those activities. (See Bonnie Zimmer for details.) Kitchen supplies, food, curtains, household supplies, etc. will eventually be needed. In addition, there will be a need for individuals who are able to spend the night at the space, individuals who are able to help with teaching English, etc.

### Quaker Spiritual Disciplines for Hard Times

by Patricia McBee (reprinted by permission from Friends Journal, August 2003)

We know how physical strength and stamina are developed: exercise, practice, repetition, discipline. The same is true of spiritual strength. Many Friends, sensing this need to build up spiritual strength, seek disciplines outside Quaker practice. We may take up Buddhist meditation, or yoga, or chanting, believing Quakerism not to have equivalent practice that will hold us and carry us through hard times. However, I am discovering that our tradition does offer us calisthenics that can help us develop the strength and stamina we need to be a healing presence in a troubled world.

It may be that when we first encounter the spiritual disciplines of early Friends, we will have to get inside their language and translate it into terms that have meaning for us today. Some of early Quaker language is unfamiliar to us. Sometimes the words are familiar, but the meanings are different. Nonetheless, my sense is that the disciplines of early Friends are accessible to contemporary Friends. Not only can we understand them, I think we will find that they do not cramp Friends into narrow, sectarian beliefs; instead, they can strengthen each of us on our personal spiritual path.

This brief article lifts up one of early Quaker spiritual disciplines for our times: **keeping low**.

#### Keeping Low

Here is term that is foreign to our vocabularies, but we know the discipline and sometimes practice it.

To keep low is

- Not to put ourselves above others
- To know our own need to be reformed each day
- To be teachable and open to the workings of the Spirit-both in times of retirement, and in the lessons that come in our outward lives
- To be taught by everyone we meet: children, bus drivers, the folks who disagree with us in meeting for business, government officials.

We know this practice. It is at the core of Quaker business process. Keeping low says that we look for ways to learn together, to integrate our piece of truth with others' pieces of truth. It is more exacting than compromise. It is the practice that can lead to miraculous moments when the Light of disparate bits of truth combines to illuminate a previously unseen path.

Even though we know this practice, we have trouble doing it. We can forget this discipline right in the midst of meeting for business, and we can really have trouble with it out in the world.

To keep low is not to be too sure we're right but to seek the divine spark in those with whom we have strong disagreements, whomever they may be - including George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden. To keep low is not to proclaim our superior understanding of diplomacy, economics, or justice. To keep low means not letting our egos freeze us in an arrogant position, acknowledging that our position is flawed and that we are striving for a fuller truth.

The miracle of keeping low, repeated so often in Quaker lore, is its power of disarming our opponents with our compassion and willingness to learn. It is a critical and exacting discipline for those who would be peacemakers.

Not only is the individual strengthened, so also is the meeting. Mary Rose O'Reilley, a Friend in Minnesota, wrote, "If someone pays attention to that part of me that struggles to know God, my search intensifies. If someone believes with me in the amazement of grace, prays with me, and reminds me of God's tenderness, I live more fully in sacred time."

Can we pay attention to that part of one another that struggles to know God, bringing one another to the amazement of a grace that will give us strength and stamina for the times we live in?

George Fox seems to have known the heart of our times when he wrote: "Looking down at sin, and corruption, and distraction, you are swallowed up in it; but looking at the light that discovers them, you will see over them. That will give victory and you will find grace and strength; and there is the first step of peace."

*Editors note: This is one section of McBee's essay. Other sections will be included in later newsletters.*

### **New from QuakerBooks: *Face to Face: Early Quaker Encounters with the Bible***

Through most of our history Friends have taken the Bible seriously and have looked to it for guidance. Friends have been leaders in testifying against war and working for peace, in recognizing the equality of women and men in Christian ministry, in working against slavery and advocating for social justice. Yet we find in the Bible passages that instruct women to be silent in the churches, that call for the destruction of entire people groups, that suggest poverty is intractable, that require the submission of slaves. The earliest Friends constantly quoted the Bible—and it is clear that their pioneering positions on matters such as war, women's ministry, and justice derive from their understanding of the Bible. How can this be? The writings of George Fox, Edward Burrough, and Margaret Fell demonstrate that at least these three, first-generation Friends, were reading the Bible with empathy. For them the heart of the Bible lay in its personal narratives. Out of this empathetic reading emerged their innovative understanding of the Christian way of life.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** T. Vail Palmer, Jr. grew up as a member of Concord Meeting (PA). He holds a BA in mathematics and philosophy from Penn and his PhD in ethics and society from the University of Chicago Divinity School. He also held a postdoctoral T. Wistar Brown Fellowship in Quaker studies at Haverford. A former editor of Quaker Religious Thought, Vail has been recorded as a minister by yearly meetings in Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, and Evangelical Friends Church International. He is now a member and recorded minister of the convergent Freedom Friends Church (unaffiliated) in Salem, Oregon. For a fuller biography of Vail, visit [www.barclaypress.com/vailpalmer](http://www.barclaypress.com/vailpalmer).

**Publisher:** Barclay Press

### **A Walk in the Quaker Woods — Jean Larson, with photographs by Bill Mitchell**

September 24, 2017

I walked out to meet Bill after we ate lunch at the rise of meeting and found him pruning the Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) planted by the Iranian couple on their around the world bicycle trip dedicated to peace and the environment. We dragged the branches into the woods to add to piles of brush in place to slow the flow of flood water to lessen the damage to the plant communities. While we were at it we noticed a cluster of jumpseed (*Persicaria virginiana*), whose scientific name was changed in March 2016 as part of the reorganization of plants into families to reflect insights gained through genetic testing.

Not quite two weeks before, early Monday morning of September 11, 2107, Hurricane Irma brought tropical storms winds and rain that nearly filled the back retention pond and downed a number of trees around the property including some small ones that crossed the split rail fence near the meeting for worship space. Now the back retention pond has water only in its deepest part, and while we have carted many loads of tiny to medium branches into the woods to clear the drive and our parking spaces, there is still more to move.



Jumpseed (*Persicaria virginiana*)

We headed for the place where the ditch enters our property at the border with Shir Shalom. I saw fish or tadpoles in the water which continues to flow, and suspect they are tadpoles because they were wrigglier than the small creatures I usually see in the creek. I admired a small scarlet morning glory (*Ipomoea hederifolia*), which is called scarlet creeper in the Atlas of Florida plants, while Bill was finding air potatoes and other exotic invasive plants to remove. Then we headed for the creek to see how the area of the creek just below the junction with the ditch had fared in the hurricane.

Two weeks earlier on the Sunday afternoon before Irma arrived early Monday morning, we had



Scarlet creeper morning glory (*Ipomoea hederifolia*)

checked this area and Bill had moved about 8 concrete blocks to reinforce the his efforts at stabilizing the bank. On Monday afternoon, after the storm, we saw a cluster of trees which had dropped over this part of the creek near where Bill has been adding native plants. So Bill had taken a chain saw to some of those hanging over the creek leaving one living tree propped up by the up tilted rootball of

a substantial fallen hackberry tree. Today, we saw the branches he tossed on the bank and observed how stable the remaining tree was, stretched horizontally across the creek.

To continue our look at the continuing effects of the storm and continued substantial flow of water, we detoured from our usual path near the banks of the creek to circle around the root balls of the downed trees. When we got close to the point where the creek heads south to the neighboring property, I saw a fish nearly four inches long, the largest I have seen for awhile. A substantial amount of sand has been deposited in the sloping area which serves as an overflow area when the creek is flooding and Bill found a mushroom with scalloped edges there. We headed for the pond area and skirted around its edge. It seemed to me that some sand had been removed from this area,<sup>1</sup> especially in contrast to the work Bill has done to help a population of yellow star grass (*Hypoxis curtissii*) which had been getting covered with sand and now was higher than the path we usually walk.

We ended our walk looking at some of the wildflowers blooming near the meeting house. In the utility strip where we had scattered seeds two falls ago, There was spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), and blue mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*). There was another patch of blue mistflower along the edge of the parking lot close to the berm on the west side of the front retention basin.

As we walked through the woods we were taking in changes in all directions around us, getting new bearings and updating our mental maps with all the changes from Irma. Do you take time to let your mind be like a lantern reaching out in all directions and open to what appears?



The front retention pond, after Irma.

<sup>1</sup> Some of this was sand I put into sandbags to help protect the yellow star. — Bill

**Queries for the Tenth Month:**

How do Friends meet our responsibilities to the community and the world? ■ Do we seek to transform the world with our loving spirit? Do we take an active interest in the social and economic conditions of our community? ■ Have we objectively considered the causes of discrimination, and are we ready to abandon old prejudices and think anew? ■ Do we as individuals and as a meeting do all in our power to end governmental, social, economic, and educational injustices in our community and to create equal opportunity for all? ■ How do we as individuals and as a meeting promote the welfare of those in need and work to secure a just distribution of the world's resources? ■ What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to understand and remove the causes of war and violence and to develop the conditions and institutions of peace? ■ Do we understand the causes of social ills, and work toward their removal?

**Advices for the Tenth Month:**

Be not content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert, sensitive, and questioning mind. ■ Understand and maintain Friends' witness for truth, simplicity, and nonviolence, holding up your personal life to these testimonies. ■ Encourage inclusiveness, and discourage discrimination. Friends' belief in that of God in everyone should lead to reverence for all life and to personal integrity. Encourage all efforts to overcome prejudices and antagonisms. ■ Cherish diversity. ■ Aid and comfort those afflicted or in prison that they may rebuild their lives. ■ Work for the abolition of the death penalty. ■ Let the way that we live contribute to the realization of a peaceable kingdom on earth.

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