

QUAKER NEWSLETTER

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

www.gainesvillequakers.org

You desire Truth in the inward being; therefore teach me Wisdom in my secret heart.

Psalm 51:6

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

Calendar of Events: (online at 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: 5:00 pm Witness at Corner of 23rd Ave and 43rd St to Support Immigrant Justice (weather permitting)

Every Tuesday: 5:30 pm Tai Chi with Arun

Wednesdays (2nd and 4th): 5:30 pm Spiritual Explorations and Meeting for Worship

Sunday, December 2

9:30 am Library committee

9:30 am Meetinghouse committee

1:00 pm Forum: Confronting Privilege

Sunday, December 9

1:00 pm Meeting for Worship for Business

Tuesday, December 11

12:00 pm Friendly Lunch - at the Meeting House

Sunday, December 16

9:40 am Peace and Social Concerns Committee

1:00 pm Meeting Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 19

Deadline for newsletter items. Email to Bonnie Zimmer at gfquakernews@gmail.com

Friday, December 21

Deadline for Agenda Items for (next month) Meeting with a Concern for Business

Sunday, December 23

9:40 am Peace and Social Concerns Committee

1:00 pm Biblical and Spiritual Explorations

Sunday, December 30

Intervisitation Sunday

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

December 16: Meeting Holiday Party

The Meeting Holiday Party will be on December 16. Please sign up to bring various types of pot-luck dishes to share.

After the shared dinner there will be carol singing in the worship room.

Notes From the SEYM Field Secretary for EarthCare

31 Tenth Month 2018

Earlier this month, the Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) Steering Committee held its Fall meeting at the Dumas Bay Centre in Federal Way, Washington. Twice a year, the Steering Committee gathers to do business, worship together, learn from each other, and share in fellowship. The meetings are open to all who are interested in Earthcare, whether you serve on the Steering Committee or not. The sessions are a great way to meet others, be inspired others' stories, and create a supportive community in the face of climate disruption and the isolation so common in our modern world. This meeting, we will plan our goals for the upcoming six months to foster a creative, Spirit-led movement for the future of the planet and her peoples. We have begun a practice of opening with Worship Sharing each morning with queries provided by QEW's Spiritual Nurturance Committee. The queries are shared below and may be useful as you discern your work in this movement.

Sixthday morning:

- What is our QEW's most important contribution?
- How can we be more faithful in delivering our messages of the necessity for spiritual transformation in our relationship with the Earth community and Spirit-led action on its behalf?
- How can QEW deepen its roots to nurture and facilitate growth?

Seventhday Morning:

- What facilitates our listening to all beings from the heart?
- How do you find paths to share natures' stories with communities around you?

Firstday Morning:

- What language can we use to think and talk about creation that doesn't set us apart from it?
- How do you appreciate the part each being (including those too small to for us to see) plays in the Community of Life?
- What helps you take the time to see nature's systems in action as you observe the world around you?

Christmas Family

Our Christmas Family this year is a family that is preparing to leave the Peaceful Paths shelter and move into a home. They need many household items (kitchen supplies such as cookware, dishes, and flatware) as well as clothing for the four children and typical things that children wish for (bicycles, dolls, etc.) A list is posted in the Social Room.

New from Quaker Books

Unlearning God: How Unbelieving Helped Me Believe by Philip Gulley.

The words "unlearning" and "unbelieving" make it plain that this is going to be a journey of letting go of inherited certainties. Phil Gulley's mother was a "One True Church" Catholic and his father a small-town Baptist, two churches he early in life began perceiving as extremes of closed-minded rigidity. This book is the chronicle of his journey—some of which has been the subject of his various books—of learning about God by jettisoning all he had been taught that no longer made sense.

The 16 chapters have titles like "We Revered Women Too Much to Let Them Lead"; "I Was Pleased to Discover God and I Hated the Same Things"; and "God Is Everywhere, but Mostly in America." Each chapter takes up one aspect of God that he found he had to abandon. Some he discovered to be absurdities to be cast aside easily and early in life; others involved long and painful struggle. "God's will" can never replace personal responsibility; religious certainty and infallibility are called "a cancer"; churches always assume power and control, middlemen between us and God; being "saved" permanently in an identifiable moment is an illusion; the poisonous alliance of God and country is to be avoided, as are all boundaries and identity groups since they imply the exclusion of all others. "Holiness codes are used to signal a 'separateness' from the world"; many of them involve attire or hairstyle, but they might consist of words. These "codes" are agreed-upon group badges of identity, having little function other than creating a distinct sense of "us." (Could he have perhaps included here our "Fourth Day, Seventh Month"?)

The reader can hardly fail to note Gulley's trademark blend of humor and bluntness; the back cover summary rightly juxtaposes the words "charm" and "provoke." Some Catholics will indeed

feel their belief in the veneration of Mary is being too easily dismissed when he writes “they idolized [her] because of her rare ability to bear children without ever having sex.” For some others, religion is a matter of fervent celebration: The neighbor family was “hollering and praying and singing ... and drinking battery acid for all I knew.”

Gulley’s dismissal of the beliefs he abandons can seem unsparing at times, but it is regularly neutralized by his disarming playfulness (as I’ve experienced myself over the years, occasionally hearing him deliver a message or invited talk). In this book it frequently takes the form of a hilarious childhood reaction to the beliefs he was being taught. When he was told that the idea of the Trinity was similar to the way an egg consists of three inseparable parts, he reports: “I pointed out that my mom separated egg whites from yolks whenever she made a chocolate pie and suggested he needed a better analogy.” It is to his credit that he recognizes this and confesses, “I have noticed my own tendency to dismiss the spiritual experiences of others, and have had to tamp down that temptation when writing this book.”

If Gulley occasionally rides irreverently (but with a wink) over a cherished belief, this does not seriously distract from his core message, which he articulates forcefully in the final chapter called “The God Remaining.” The formative step in all this stripping away of the received God of our early years, the “unlearning,” is to be willing to question, doubt, and welcome change as the ground where the Spirit can enter. Then all the succeeding steps follow. What we are searching for, minus all the distraction, is the Divine Presence within us, any welling up of love which is a sign of God. What we call God’s love is “the power to stir and expand the human spirit.” Human self-transcendent love is “one’s commitment to the growth of the beloved,” so the key is the desire for all genuine relatedness, most powerfully in the fertile ground of the spiritual community. Ultimately, Gulley’s message in this book, the latest of his series of books on matters of faith, is a simple and unambiguous but challenging one: undertake a lifetime journey of exploration, retaining only what resonates with our experience.

Related: [QuakerSpeak’s interview with Philip Gulley](#)
[Unlearning God: How Unbelieving Helped Me Believe](#)

Reviewed by William Shetter

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

November 30, 2018

Bill and I started our walk at the small pollinator garden in the utility strip. We observed only one plant still blooming, a black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). While Bill photographed the lone flower, I picked up a dried bundle of weeds to add to one of Bill’s berms, and headed out to the woods, noting that the Georgia calamint (*Calamintha georgiana*) was still blooming up around the Peace Pole. When I turned around after depositing my bundle of weeds, Bill was already entering the woods.

We headed to the ditch at the northern boundary with Shir Shalom where the river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) were prospering. Earlier attempts to grow river oats in wetter places had not succeeded, so we are hopeful that we have found a right place for this graceful grass.

Bill proposed we head to the northwest corner, so we entered a part of the woods we had not visited for a while. The area was pleasantly open and filled with fall light. We saw the results of our work removing the exotic invasive coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*) in a Greater Raider Invader Rally a previous January, and are looking forward to another one this coming January.

We followed the creek back to the ditch, continued along the creek below the ditch until reaching the point it turns south, where we turned east. When we approached the eastern edge of the property, we decided to walk down to the established path to the point where the creek has been ditched to send the water under Newberry Road and survey another substantial patch of coral ardisia. We returned to the parking lot with a full bucket of trash consisting mainly of beverage containers and their related lids and caps, and a straw.

We enjoyed the quiet beauty of the fall in the Florida woods. Do you take time to enjoy the peace and beauty of nature during the busy holiday season?



Few flowers are out now, but this black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) is still hanging on.

Queries for the Twelfth Month:

Do we work for peace in the world? Do we nurture peace within ourselves? ■ Do we “live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars”?
■ Do we seek consistently to carry out this testimony for peace in all our relationships, including family, community, and work life? ■ Do we as individuals and as members of a meeting seek to take part in the ministry of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations? ■ Do we faithfully maintain our peace testimony? ■ Do we reject military training, preparation for war, and participation in war as inconsistent with the spirit of Christ’s teachings? ■ Do we as a meeting take a stand and do all we can to remove the causes of war and violence?

Advices for the Twelfth Month:

War is contrary to the life and teaching of Jesus. Seek through God’s power and grace to overcome in our hearts the emotions that lie at the root of conflict. ■ Strive for nonviolent approaches to conflicts in all aspects of our lives. ■ Every human being is a beloved child of God and has that divine spark which claims our reverence. War is a denial of this truth. ■ Friends’ peace testimony is the positive exercise of good will calling us to lend our influence to all that strengthens the growth of international friendships and understanding. ■ Cultivate an active spirit of love and peace.

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