

Second Hour on the Question of a Banner for Meeting's Presence at Public Events

The Peace & Social Concerns Committee asked Meeting for a Second Hour to consider getting a banner that Friends could display at public events, rallies, and protests. This meeting was held on August 19th. There were about 15 Friends attending.

Realizing that anyone can become swept up in the spirit of public demonstrations on such issues as racism, weapons of war, and the mistreatment of women, immigrants, and minorities, the primary purpose of the banner would be to provide a witness, reminder, or prompt to ourselves and others to encourage everyone to conduct ourselves in ways that are consistent with peace, justice, mutual respect, and reconciliation. Such a witness may be especially helpful when there are offensive and vocal counter-demonstrators or armed security, or when the public gathering occurs in certain provocative locations such as a Confederate Monument or nuclear weapons plant.

During the course of the Second Hour, the additional goal of community outreach to non-Quakers was expressed and affirmed by those present. We thought some who view the banner might become interested in the faith and practice of Friends, and perhaps want to attend our Meeting to see what we are about.

From my notes here are my recollections of what Friends did and said:

- We started with a moment of silent centering.
- I described the simple banner I had helped hold when I was in London during the early years of the War in Iraq: "QUAKER SILENT WITNESS FOR PEACE." Several of us held the banner while one or two other Friends stood by to give a pamphlet on Quaker ideals of nonviolence in the context of the war to interested passersby.
- I reported that Carol Nickle, who could not attend, sent in the suggestion: "West Knoxville Friends Meeting (Quakers)," with no additional message so "it can be used for diverse issues, which the other churches do." (Carol may have followed up with another suggestion, but I can't seem to find it.)
- We looked at a sampling of pictures of banners (see below) that Friends from other places have been using to give us ideas and stimulate our discernment.
- We liked the idea of including the name and website address for our Quaker Meeting. We were concerned that the present url through FGC is rather long (www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/west-knoxville-friends-meeting). (Update: evidently the older, shorter one links automatically to this one, <http://westknoxvillefriends.org>.)
- We liked the idea of including Quaker testimonies like one of the banners we viewed. That one included the following: "Integrity-Unity-Peace-Equality-Simplicity."
- We spent the rest of the meeting pitching other ideas for specific wording. These included:
 - In addition to "Peace," include one or more other key words like "Justice," "Mercy," and "Equality." "Peace" by itself is insufficient.
 - Specific word combinations suggested were "Quakers March With Love," "Peace with Equality / Justice with Mercy," and "Practice Peace, Equality, & Mercy."
 - Some thought the word "Witness" has deep spiritual meaning to us but maybe isn't widely understood and so may have limited value from a "marketing" perspective; others of us liked it.

- The wording we select should be “general” to permit the banner being used in a variety of circumstances.
 - Whatever we choose, wording should be “pithy” to be noticed and remembered.
 - An historic Quaker quote would be great, like “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons; this is our testimony to the whole world.”
- In closing, Friends thought we needed to let the wording season and come back to it at a future Second Hour, and that we should follow Quaker process in deciding when the banner should be used. For example, should Meeting approve every use? Is it up to Peace and Social Concerns Committee? Etc.

For the Peace & Social Concerns Committee,

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Quakers for Peace with Justice

West Knoxville Friends Meeting

<http://westknoxvillefriends.org>





Quaker Silent Witness for Peace

“Peace begins in the hearts of people”

West Knoxville Friends Meeting

<http://westknoxvillefriends.org>