

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

December 2016

Friends' Beliefs

It is difficult to write a description of Friends beliefs that would be acceptable to all the Quakers in the world today. This account relies heavily on one provided by the Earlham School of Religion. Quakers all share common roots in a Christian movement that arose in England in the middle of the 17th Century. Today, it is generally true that Friends still adhere to certain essential principles: a belief in the possibility of direct, unmediated communion with the Divine (historically expressed by George Fox in the statement, "Christ is come to teach his people himself"); and a commitment to living lives that outwardly attest to this inward experience.

Nonetheless, modern Friends exhibit significant variations in the ways we interpret our traditions and practice this belief. This is nowhere more marked than in the United States which contains four distinct branches, Liberal, Conservative, Pastoral, and Evangelical. All are active in service work. But are divided by worship practices and creed.

In worship, Liberal Friends still practice unprogrammed "silent" meetings where the entire meeting for worship is held in expectant waiting on God, emphasizing the authority of the Inward Light (though this was conservative in origin, adhering to the earliest practices). Their Yearly Meetings belong to the Friends General Conference.

Conservative Friends also hold silent meetings but have an emphasis on the authority of the bible, some practicing traditional "plainness" of dress and speech. These Friends do not have a national organization.

.....
Dec. 4, A Special Day
Come to celebrate Ruth Lofgren's 100th birthday at the Pot Luck lunch. And before that, the children will give us a reading to get us in the holiday mood. Surrounding us will be books, DVDs and CDs to exchange. [Do bring what you are ready to part with, and trade up.] Following the festivities, we will gather to Thresh out security concerns. This will not be for decision making, but to share various problems and proposed remedies. So, put the date on your calendar and join the fun.
.....

Calendar

- Dec 4 Pot Luck & Celebrate Ruth's 100th birthday; Book Exchange; Children's reading; Threshing Session on Meeting Security
- Dec 11 Forum: Begin State of the Meeting Report
- Dec 18 Meeting for Business 11:30: Budget & Nominations
- Dec 24 Christmas Eve. Worship 6:30 & Celebration Pot Luck 7:30
- Dec 25 Christmas Day.
- Dec 28 Mid Week Worship 7-8, Gary
- Dec 31 New Year's Fellowship, Singing, Light refreshments. Joni & James, 3 – 5 pm. All welcome.

Pastoral Quakers have programmed services led by a pastor, similar to many Protestant denominations. They lie in two divisions, both active in missionary and evangelical work, but one more strongly “Evangelical.” The less evangelical are affiliated with Friends United Meeting. The former are generally affiliated with Evangelical Friends Church International,.

The dynamic tension between emphasis on the authority of Christian Scripture, and the greater emphasis on the authority of the immediate guidance of the Spirit has allowed for a wide range of religious perspectives., particularly within Liberal Meetings, where no creed is required of us..

Friends TESTIMONIES

These are concerns held by Friends that one’s outward life needs to bear witness to the truth discerned inwardly. Four main inter-connected testimonies are:

EQUALITY. There is that of God in each person and each has opportunities to express that divinity.

INTEGRITY (TRUTH). A person needs to be in true harmony with him or herself, and to be whole spiritually one needs to live one’s beliefs.

PEACE. A positive concern towards taking away the occasion of all wars and the commitment to nonviolence in resolving all matters of conflict.

SIMPLICITY. A commitment to living simply, avoiding all excess, living intentionally and with restraint, and living a life true to one’s beliefs.

(Adapted from “QUAKERISM – a religion meaningful for today’s world,” Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1994)

Testimonies are the “outward evidence of a transformed life, not fundamental principles or doctrines ,” Lloyd Lee Wilson.

There are now two more testimonies:

COMMUNITY. Balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the group. Teaching respect for everyone and the idea that everyone has a piece of the truth.

STEWARDSHIP. Protecting and caring for the Earth in a sacred trust. Walking lightly on the Earth, recycling and reusing whenever possible, and reducing the amount of energy we consume.

(From Connecticut Friends School, in *Friends Journal*.)

Testimonies may change as new needs and concerns emerge.



Personal News

On Sunday the 4th, we shall celebrate Ruth’s 100th birthday. The world has been able to appreciate her concerns and assistance through those 100 years in her journey from Utah, through New York, to San Antonio. We will express our appreciation on Dec 3. At Business Meeting Jim kept hopping up, reporting

for everything, it seemed.

Carol, our clerk, had stepped down for the remainder of the year. Her place is being taken by Gretchen and Val. Gary has reached the age when he dreams of being a Grandpa.

Seeking the Spirit of the Season

Some Christmas Queries from New Eng-

land YM:

On Simplicity:

[This is our Query, below, this month]

On Peace:

At this time of year, there is more attention given to "Peace on Earth." Is there significance in the birth of Jesus, the "Prince of Peace" that calls us to actively seek peace? What do you do to promote peace in the world? Are you able to find inner peace in the midst of everyday business? Do you walk gently and peacefully on the Earth, seeking that of God in others and in nature?

On Light:

In this time of winter darkness and cold, where do you find Light in your Life? As the shepherds waited for the good news, do you wait with an open heart for revelation? How do you and your family seek the Light and share it with others? Have you been able to find rituals that enhance the experience of the Inner Light?

On Preparation:

How does your family get ready for Christmas? What do you wish your family did around Christmas? At what age did you start giving presents to other people? Did someone work on them with you?

Business Meeting

Meeting for Business commenced with an advice of William Penn:

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.

Meeting began in silence As clerk, Val shared letters of thanks for donations.

Meeting approved that minutes should be sent out by email in advance.

Nominating Committee: Gretchen made available the preliminary roster of 2017. There is as yet no Treasurer. Gretchen asked Meeting to bring any suggestions to her or Bill S.

The treasurer reported that despite an

increase in the "orphan" figure there are no material deficiencies in our finances Operating Cash is now less than \$400. There have been no expenditures from the Sinking Fund, still negative. There were no other activities to report. General contributions continue to lag. We will need income of about \$7,500 more to make up the budget. We need to reduce spending for the remainder of 2016 to necessities.

Jim S will check the finances from the beginning of 2016 and transfer them to a finance program chosen by the 2017 Treasurer.

M&O considered the new FGC Spiritual Deepening Program. Members are concerned that we are overburdening individuals with Meeting responsibilities. It is exploring an offer of help by the Yearly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Care.

Property Committee reported that both HVAC systems were serviced and techs discovered that one of the condensers had 0 % Freon and a leak and rust. Two options for repairing the system are, \$3,598.64 to replace the coil and current air handler, \$3,860.00; or replacing both systems, \$7,920.00. Meanwhile, we will probably not have HVAC in the main wing.

Wildflowers are being planted. A man injured his head on a low branch over the path; this branch will be removed. The cement walkway and patio will be power washed to tidy up.

The Working Group on Meeting Security wants to identify security concerns: Break-ins, with or without theft and vandalism of the interior; Broken windows or doors or other outside destruction; Homeless people sleeping in the porch area; "Household" goods left discretely on property; Trash or paper in the bushes, minor paint spills from children's play, etc.; Children playing on Meetinghouse property; Dog-walking and other activities typical of a public park.

It identified several measures that might solve some of these problems. Friends agreed to have a Threshing Session on 4 December to consider these.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee discussed the list of organizations to which Meeting should donate in 2017 (see below). A forum will be [now was] held 20 November to discuss the proposed contributions

Cielo Grande Quarterly Meeting asked Friends to hold Jude Filler in the light as she struggled with worsening health [since then, Jude died peacefully in her sleep].

Meeting agreed to sponsor the 2017 Quarterly meeting, including home hospitality, housing recommendations, and meals.

The theme for 2017 Yearly Meeting is Environmental Racism, Climate Change, Quaker Faith and Practice and their intersection.

Ken brought an invitation to Friends to attend a local mosque for Friday prayers as a show of solidarity. This was approved.

Meeting closed with silence

Support of Change

AFSC will be starting up a new cohort of Quaker social change ministry groups beginning in January. "As Quakers, our faith calls us to be agents for social change. Without a supportive community, social change work can be draining, confusing, unsustainable, frustrating, and scattered. Quaker Social Change Ministry (QSCM) provides a simple but transformative approach to doing social change work, bringing together small groups of Friends to focus on an issue that connects the congregation, the local community, and AFSC. Learn more and sign up to be considered for the next cohort at afsc.org/QSCM"

Meeting Donations

Meeting donates to local and national organizations. Jim S led a forum to provide greater aid to Peace and Social Concerns Committee in selecting which organizations should receive aid in 2017. The local organizations the committee listed for 2017, proposing between \$100 and \$300 each, are:

Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, which works collaboratively to support people of color, women, lesbians, and gay men, the working class, and poor, seeking to build bridges across divides.

The PEACE Initiative (Putting an End to Abuse

through Community Efforts) is a coalition of 52 public and private institutions, grassroots organizations and individuals working to end family violence.

COPS/Metro Alliance (Communities Organized for Public Service) is a coalition of congregations, schools, and unions to act on behalf of children, families, and neighborhoods.

The Interfaith Welcome Coalition has helped thousands of women and children who have traveled thousands of miles to escape violence in their homelands.

The Catholic Worker House provides care, comfort, and support for homeless, poor, and marginalized individuals who need food and other basic services.

Chrysalis/Bexar County Detention Ministries provides worship services, support groups, pastoral counseling, and/or educational classes in 10 adult or juvenile detention centers in San Antonio, and Karnes City areas.

Fuerza Unida is a women's group formed to protest women's rights when Levi Strauss closed its factory putting over 1,000 women out of work, and now works on women's empowerment for self-sufficiency and labor rights, immigration, environmental issues, and health education.

The committee listed the following national and international organizations, proposing between \$100 and \$200 each:

American Friends Service Committee, working for social justice, peace, and humanitarian service, based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

Friends Committee on National Legislation, a Quaker lobby in the public interest. FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences, and testimonies of Friends to bear on policy decisions in the nation's capital.

Friends General Conference is a national conference of Friends' yearly and monthly meetings, most of which are unprogrammed. Our Meeting is affiliated with FGC.

Friends World Committee for Consultation

encourages fellowship among the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs, and styles of worship among Friends across the world.

Friends Journal, an independent national magazine serving Friends in America.

Quaker Voluntary Service, providing support to a network of Quaker service communities, hoping to provide opportunities for yearlong voluntary service to orient lives committed to service and justice.

Friends Peace Teams, Latin America, assisting individual Friends, Friends churches, Monthly and Yearly meetings in supporting Peace Teams projects for volunteers in conflicted communities. (Val has worked here.)

Religion and Evil

In silence, we seek the voice of God within us, though we may vary in our words for it. Steven Weinberg, not a Friend, has said, “With or without it [religion] you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”

James Watson adds, “Bad men will be bad with or without religion. Religion gives the bad men a leg to stand on. When you can support your atrocities with scripture from Leviticus and Deuteronomy, you just may get more support. Belief in one’s personal god makes people want to kill people who don’t believe in Him, for one. And this fact cannot be denied: God has achieved a mighty body count.”

What a sad indictment of religion, with a strong core of truth. The bible provides verses which have to confuse. Within the early part of the Old Testament, I Chronicles 16:34 says that God is good and merciful. Jeremiah 13:14 says “God will not pity, nor spare, nor show mercy, but destroy them.” So, can that cause good people to do evil things?

Friends’ testimonies, our experiences, deny the claim in Jeremiah. Our testimonies are not part of a Friends’ creed, but are derived from experiences in our silence. Friends have been persecuted in the past but reacted with love and mercy. Who are the good people and the evil

people amongst us? Or where are the good Friends doing evil things?

RAICES – Forward

Dear Friends,

After an exhausting campaign and emotional election night, I want to write to all of you and address my hope for the work that we are doing, and will continue to do, at RAICES.

Since our founding almost thirty years ago, the world has changed many times over. At each turn, RAICES has responded to the needs of the most vulnerable and most negatively-impacted by upheaval, unrest and abuse. Each of these times, we began with our backs up against the wall, wondering what to do. And each and every time, we decided to move forward despite an uncertain future.

Serving children and families, and calling for more justice for immigrants and refugees here in Texas and across the nation: this is what we do; this is why we have all come together. With this understanding, and this ability, comes a great responsibility to take action.

In 2014, when Lackland Air Force Base opened up to house unaccompanied kids in our backyard, we came together and responded. Later that year, when we saw a resurgence of family detention like we’d never seen before, we came together and responded. Just a few months ago, when Fort Bliss was opened to hold unaccompanied kids in a more distant backyard, we still came together and responded.

This time is no different.

For the next four years and beyond, we will continue to fight against any attempts to marginalize, harm, disrupt, or force out anyone in our community; and to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all who are ready to organize with us.

Our work is not finished; it has only just begun. Today, we move forward...together, in solidarity,

Jonathan Ryan

AFSC's Centennial Summit.

As part of their 100th anniversary celebration, AFSC is sponsoring a summit from April 20-23, 2017 in Philadelphia. With the summit, they will articulate a vision forward for peace and justice by joining movements that are making the connection between militarism, racism, and materialism. The summit consists of an academic symposium and a variety of workshops, culminating in a day of action to "let our lives speak." Everyone is welcome to participate in the summit, but pre-registration is required to attend the workshops. If you would like to stay or eat at the hotel during the summit, there will be a cost for registering. If you choose to eat on your own and stay elsewhere, the registration is free. For full details, please visit the AFSC Centennial Website.

As part of the Summit, there will be an exhibit, *Waging Peace*: "100 Years of Action demonstrates the effectiveness of nonviolence to build justice, overcome oppression and prevent violence using the provocative stories of those who fought against injustice and those who have been helped in the fight during the last century. The exhibit addresses issues we continue to struggle with today: Building Peace, Ending Discrimination, Addressing Prisons, Just Economies, and Immigrant Rights. The final section is a Call to Action, inspiring visitors to engage in justice work beyond the museum."

At <https://www.afsc.org/centennial> you can learn about AFSC's past and its vision for the future. Currently it has 75 programs and 53 offices in 48 cities worldwide, in China, N. Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia, Cambodia, Israel, Jordan, Somalia, Burundi, Zimbabwe, and, of course, the USA. These involve a program staff of 210 and more than 3200 volunteers. Building peace, and ending discrimination are the two greatest program areas, with justice in economies and prison issues following.

Miscellany

A headline in the NY Times: "Maybe Hoover

Shouldn't Be Our Least Popular President . . ." So, at last, our Quaker reputation for having the most unpopular presidents may lapse. As for Nixon, perhaps he deserved it. But poor Hoover, a successful engineer and highly popular philanthropist working against hunger in postwar Europe, met his match in the depression, without any Keynesian help to defeat it. He ushered in the depression, part of capitalism's ups and downs, and was blamed for it.

~~~~~  
#UnlockJustice – Saturday December 10th is FCNL's Community Lobby Day, a day to go to see our congressperson in his or her office to lobby for justice. You sign up at [fcnl.org/lobbyday](http://fcnl.org/lobbyday).

For questions, email Julia Neumann, Strategy Coordinator, [julia@fcnl.org](mailto:julia@fcnl.org)

~~~~~  
What is heroism? A PBS program showed three San Antonians who, in WWI received the Congressional Medal of Honor. In each case they had taken initiative and fought enemy forces, killing large numbers single-handedly, and allowing their unit to move forwards.

The men they killed were "enemy." Not fathers, sons, husbands, brothers. This is what war does, transform other men into the enemy. Abstract figures, armed and ready to kill, even shooting to kill, so "we" must kill them, even as they must kill "us."

Predator animals kill but they kill to eat. Evolution, or God, has shaped them so that they eat meat to survive. Humans also eat meat, but we kill more often, sometimes for pleasure, and often for power over land or other humans.

So, has evolution shaped us in this way? Or have we shaped ourselves, desiring power or social status?

~~~~~  
Bonnie Raitt, a Quaker, has added her voice (though not her singing voice) to AFSC's appeal for funds. She remained "deeply committed to causes that appealed to my Quaker

values” as her music career unfolded.

She works for peace between Israel and Palestine, “Engaging North Korea in dialogue,” reducing profitmaking prisons and for restorative justice, immigrants’ rights and stopping their detention,, and reducing poverty and discrimination.

## Creation Within Us

How close are we to the moment of Creation? Perhaps closer than seems likely. Electrons are thought to have existed since the Big Bang, the moment of origin seen by cosmologists, when the universe, space-time, elementary particles, energy, and some version of the laws of physics, burst into existence. It took some time, like 400,000 years, for complex atoms to come into existence, and much longer than that for much more complex atoms to occur. The most complex are held to have been created, by the new organization, the interweaving, of the matter and energy within them, by the force of supernovae. Many more than once.

Those particles, heated to superlevels in the supernovae, condensed into heavier atoms than had existed before, blown out into space where they drifted until caught by gravity and massing together in greater and greater masses such as our galaxy, with “pools” like our solar system within it.

The whole, including us, is composed of highly organized elementary particles formed out of the even more elementary ones at the time of the Big Bang. So we have the Big Bang within us. We are organized particles, electrons, nucleons, light and heavy atoms, molecules, cells (3 trillion), organs, brains, and minds. We are what is known as emergent phenomena, emerging from the evolutionary organization and

repeated new organizations of what was present in the initial universe.

But from what were these created? That is a matter of faith. There is no known physical evidence.

## New Book

Forward by Philip Gulley:

J. Brent Bill's *Holy Silence, the Gift of Quaker Spirituality* is a contemporary classic on sacred silence. With warmth, wisdom, and gentle humor, Bill presents the Quaker practice of silence and expectant listening to a wider Christian audience. This revised and expanded edition includes new spiritual silence practices and a new section on incorporating holy silence into worship. Written by one of the most respected interpreters of the Quaker tradition, *Holy Silence* opens up for readers a fresh way of connecting with God.

## Vigilants' Poem

We stand vigilant...

for those feeling and living in fear,  
for those impacted by violence and loss,  
for those experiencing marginalization and isolation.

We pray vigilant...

for hardened hearts to be softened,  
for Love's light to dispel any darkness,  
for people of hope to rise up in actions of the heart.

From the PeaceCenter

## Query

In this time of commercialism, how do you reflect values of simplicity? In what ways do you and your family reflect on the significance of Jesus' life and his teachings regarding simplicity? Is your gift giving in line with these values? Have you been able to find rituals that enhance the experience of the Inner Light?

Meeting for Worship is held on Sunday at 10 a.m., followed by refreshments and a Forum discussion at 11.30, usually lasting until about 12.45. Children are invited to join worship for the first fifteen minutes, after which they may go to join with the Young Friends program. Child care is available during Forum.

Clerk: Fretchen Haynes; e-mail: [clerk@saquakers.org](mailto:clerk@saquakers.org).

Newsletter Editor: Ken Southwood, (210)828-1513; e-mail: [jksouthwood@grandecom.net](mailto:jksouthwood@grandecom.net)

Website: <http://www.sanantonioquakers.org>

Donations may be made to Friends Meeting of San Antonio, 7052 N. Vandiver, San Antonio TX78209.

Meeting telephone for meeting times or to ask for other information: (210) 945-8456