

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

February 2014

The Irish Potato Famine 1846-1850

William Bennett, a member of the Society of Friends, visited Co Mayo in 1847 and sent a report of what he found:

We entered a cabin. Stretched in one dark corner, scarcely visible from the smoke and rags that covered them, were three children huddled together, lying there because they were too weak to rise, pale and ghastly; their little limbs, on removing a portion of the filthy covering, perfectly emaciated, eyes sunk, voice gone, and evidently in the last stage of actual starvation.

We entered upwards of fifty of these tenements. The scene was invariably the same.

William Smith-O'Brien, a wealthy land owner from Dromoland Castle who was sympathetic to the plight of the poor, observed in 1846:

"The circumstances which appeared most aggravating was that the people were starving in the midst of plenty, and that every tide carried from the Irish ports corn sufficient for the maintenance of thousands of the Irish people."

The people who provided the most effective help to the Irish were members of the Society of Friends from America who provided food, mostly American flour, rice, biscuits and Indian meal.

They also provided funds to assist farmers to replant their fields and to support fishermen in coastal towns, measures which not only provided additional food but helped many people to get back on their feet as things improved after the famine.

In all they gave approximately £200,000 for relief in Ireland, the equivalent of more than £30 (\$45) million in today's terms.

Their efforts were widely supported in America: Private initiatives such as The Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends attempted to fill the gap caused by the end of government relief and eventually the government reinstated the relief works, although bureaucracy slowed the release of food supplies.

Between March and June of 1847, the British government gradually shut down all of the public works projects throughout Ireland. The government, under the direction of Prime Minister Russell, had decided on an abrupt change of policy "to keep the people alive." The starving Irish were now to be fed for free through soup kitchens sponsored by local relief committees and

Calendar

2. Sunday
Potluck lunch at 11.30.

7. Friday. Film, "Pay it Forward" 6.30-9.30. Potluck, snacks, discussion. Common Room.

9. Sunday
Forum – Compassionate San Antonio,. Ann Helmke..

16, Sunday.....
Meeting for Business.

23, Sunday
Forum – Discovering Your Inner Poer/ Essayist through Free Writing

by groups such as the Quakers and the British Relief Association, a private charity funded by prosperous English merchants. (The History Place - Irish Potato Famine: The Great Hunger) Dochara.com, Your Irish Friend (primarily an Unofficial Guide to Ireland, providing unbiased information.) [Not a Quaker organization.]

We are constantly challenged by examples from our history.



SIMPLICITY

Do I center my life in an awareness of God's presence, so all things take their rightful place? Do I keep my life uncluttered with things and activities avoiding commitments beyond my strength and light? Do I recognize when I have enough?

Personal News

Gary's sister is seriously ill. He has been visiting her these last few weeks. Doug is experiencing tax difficulties, since 9-11 and the war on terrorism. We have received New Year's Greetings from Rose and Eric Medellin-Myers, who were married in Meeting 18 years ago. Their greetings come from also their family, Miriam, 17, Santiago, 9, Ezra, 6, and Levi, 4. Their card is on the notice board.

We received this message from Sharon: "While I am slowly adapting to life in Berkeley, I have been going to the Strawberry Creek Meeting. They are one of the largest in the Bay area and have over a hundred and fifty attenders and members. At Sunday's Meeting, I heard about a retreat on Quaker mystics and I want to share the reading sent out before the retreat.

As ever, you are in my thoughts, Sharon Shen
She includes readings from Johannes

Tauler, (1300-61, Dominican mystic) and others for a retreat there, which contain this advice:

"That is why you should practice silence! In this way, the Word of this birth can be spoken within you and be received. But assuredly, if you determine to speak, then God must fall silent. One cannot serve the Word better than by silence and listening. If you make room for God in your soul, rest assured that God will fill it. Inasmuch as you clear away space for God, so much will divine being flow into you.

The soul should establish an interior tranquility and stillness and withdraw into itself, to hide itself in the Spirit, away from the senses, to prepare in itself a place of stillness, of inner repose.

Nurture this deep silence within, allowing it to become a habit, so that through habit it may become a powerful possession. What seems

easy to a practiced person seems impossible to an unpracticed one, for habit produces skill. May God help us to prepare in us dwelling place for this noble birth, so that we may become true spiritual mothers.”

Forums

This month's P&SC forum is Compassionate San Antonio on Feb. 9th. Our guest will be Rev. Ann Helmke. Our first voluntary all-meeting read is "Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life" by Karen Armstrong. The film we'll be initiating our screenings with, for any and all to come to, is Pay it Forward. That will take place Friday, February 7, from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. in the Common Room. The film is two hours, so the schedule allows for pre-viewing dining and camaraderie and post-viewing discussion and thought sharing. Potluck dishes and movie-viewing snacks and beverages are most welcome.

Folks needing transportation can contact me at Mcauliff@student.uiwtx.edu or 210-495-5669, and we will work out travel arrangements.

The info regarding the book and film is also posted on our FB page and website. We don't know anything about the other forum

Business Meeting

After silence, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business commenced with two advices;

“ We do not want you to copy or imitate us. We want to be like a ship that has crossed the ocean, leaving a wake of foam which soon fades away. We want you to follow the Spirit, which we have sought to follow, but which must be sought anew in every generation.” ---the Elders of Balby, 1656

“We will never assume that there is only one right way to be Quaker. Every life unfolds uniquely, and only by answering to that of God in each do we come to a greater understanding of our own path.”

---from the philosophy and goals of Friends Journal

P&SC produced a list of items it

had discussed, including taking part in the MLK March, prison ministry, forum topics including transgender issues and war and nonviolence, recommended books, the 24th Women's March, and Crosspoint halfway house.

M&O discussed issues in Meeting organization and committee appointments. The work of committees needs to be done “in the Light and Sense of the Spirit” rather than based on personal preferences. Committees are the backbone of Quaker business practice.

M&O suggested preserving M&O, Nominating, Finance, Religious Ed., and P&SC committees, creating two new committees, Hospitality and Communications, and a Schedule Coordinator from Outreach, merging Building and Grounds, and hiring a second childcare worker. Nominating Committee will work with these suggestions.

Nominating Committee proposed nominations for Trustees, already presented in December. These were approved by Meeting and, later, by the Meeting Corporation. Nominating is facing problems due to discussed needs for changes and discussed Gretchen's experience in New York..

Bill's appointment as Treasurer was approved. He stepped down from being clerk of M&O to clerk the corporation meeting at the close of business meeting.

Both meetings closed in silence.

Miscellany

We have a fellow-worshiper in the papacy, emphasizing loving care as the core Christian principle. “I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person's life,” he has said, “Even the atheists. Everyone!” And, “I would not speak about ‘absolute’ truths, even for believers. . . . Truth is a relationship.” And quoting a fifth-century saint's writings on the laws governing progress: “Even the dogma of the Christian religion must proceed from these laws. It progresses, solidifying with years, growing over time. . . So we grow in the understanding of the truth.” In St. Peter's Square he has said, “What kind of love do we

bring to others? . . . Do we treat each other like brothers and sisters?"

By rejecting fur-trimmed capes, the Mercedes car, and the papal palace as residence, he is emphasizing simplicity and equality. The director of his press office has said, laughing, "Now I am at the service of a message . . . of love and mercy. . ." On homosexuality Francis has said, "Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?" He has urged that "Parishes, colleges, and institutions must get out [into the streets.]" He speaks to us.

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The Second Annual Gathering of Friendly Mystics is June 6 – 10, at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana. More details including an invitation and the registration form are on the WCTS website:  
[whatcanstthousay.org/gatherings.html](http://whatcanstthousay.org/gatherings.html).

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At our Potluck Lunch in January the conversation was on ideas of how to increase meeting's community and visibility . Peace and Social Concerns has the list.

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We come to meeting for its shared silence. Be sympathetic, then, for the acoustical engineer Trevor Cox, designer of concert halls, who sought silence and found it, surprisingly, in a peat bog in England. Perhaps George Fox found it there.

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Our forum to discern our State of the Meeting report for 2013 was again different this year. Suzanne and Tessa led it, Suzanne instructing us how to proceed. This was to make a connection between our vision and our experience, using the non-dominant mind. Thus, we drew a figure with our non-dominant hand, interpreting it later. We had to recall a particular experience, in 2013, with a spiritual meaning. We shall hear and see the results of their work soon.

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A new kind of peacemaking – or an old kind brought up to date? The idea of beating swords

into plowshares is old and well-known, a popular adage, using a term, swords, long out of date (like pigs in pokes.) There is a sculpture of it at the UN Building in New York. Shall we eventually turn this new instance to an adage?

Warren Neff, a researcher on nuclear power, wondered if the defunct and disorganized Soviet Union's uranium 235, the fuel of atomic bombs, could be put to peaceful uses, safe from terrorists. His solution was for Russia to sell it to the United States to recycle it to power nuclear power plants. With agreement reached, he oversaw the program, culminating in December of last year in the shipment of the final drums, carrying the message "20,000 Nuclear Warheads Eliminated." His work provided a means of improving Russo-US relations at a key time.

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Pete Seeger, an anti-war and for-civil rights singer, has died. Mischievously, he gave out bumper stickers in Kansas, heartland of anti-Darwinism, reading "Gravity - it's just a theory." He was not a Friend, but his son, Dan, became a Friend.

Walk Free

Walk Free "is a movement of people everywhere fighting to end one of the world's greatest evils: Modern slavery." It reports recent developments:

Child slaves in India are being given a voice in the fight to end child forced labour;

Forced labour is being prevented under US government contracts;

Modern slavery has been criminalised in Australia;

Victims of trafficking in the US continue to receive protection and support;

International media was abuzz with news of Walk Free activists dressed up as video characters to deliver petitions to Nintendo;

FIFA pledged to keep modern slavery out of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Our Retreat

About 20 people attended the all-

day retreat on January 19th. While some afterwards expressed doubt about coming, everyone there appreciated the experience. At the end everyone was encouraged to express their experience. They spoke of going deep into the silence and experiencing the Inner Spirit more closely than before.

The silence lasted from 9.30 am through 3.00 pm, with brief explanations from David of such programed times as lunch.

Creating a coalition

In early October, an administration official called to ask if FCNL had any information on the increasing violence in the Central African Republic. Spurred partly by this phone call and partly by the repeated “red flags” being raised partner organizations on the ground, FCNL did what Quakers do best: started to build a coalition.

Over the last three months, FCNL has rallied nonprofits, aid groups and religious organizations in a coordinated campaign to mobilize the U.S. government to engage fully and meaningfully with the international community to halt violence, protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities. The results of these efforts have included:

A November 19 hearing on the crisis in the Central African Republic hosted by Reps. Chris Smith (NJ) and Karen Bass (CA).

The November 20 announcement by Secretary of State John Kerry that the U.S. will commit \$40 million to support African Peacekeeping efforts in CAR.

A November 22 statement by Sen. Chris Coons (DE) calling for international engagement in CAR and referring to the coalition press release led by FCNL.

The December 5 decision by the U.S. Mission to the U.N. to support a Security Council resolution calling for urgent action to prevent further atrocities.

President Obama’s December 9 video message to the people of CAR appealing to the local population to reject violence.

The December 10 announcement to transfer \$60 million from the Department of Defense to

the Department of State to help prevent violence from spiraling further out of control.

The December 19 White House Fact Sheet outlining a multi-dimensional U.S. assistance package to CAR—the most comprehensive strategy towards one isolated atrocity prevention situation in U.S. history.

A Forum:

At a forum in December Friends expressed their reasons for coming to Meeting:

Simplicity of worship.
Acceptance of diversity.
Healing.
Love of diversity.
The grounds; a sense of peace.
Community.
A safe place to grow.
A reminder to the larger community of another way.
Strength in peace and justice.
Sharing of space.
Silence/listening.
Loving patience.
Recognition of the loving spirit in all people.
Acceptance by the community.
Membership in the spiritual community.
Opportunity to confront oneself inwardly/lovingly.
Presence even when absent – more than a place
Care for the children.

Why Civil Resistance Works:

The Strategic Logic Of Nonviolent Conflict,

By Erica Chenoweth

Quakerbooks, in its website, has this brief description of her book: “For more than a century, from 1900 to 2006, campaigns of nonviolent resistance were more than twice as effective as their violent counterparts in achieving their stated goals. By attracting impressive support from citizens, whose

activism takes the form of protests, boycotts, civil disobedience, and other forms of nonviolent noncooperation, these efforts help separate regimes from their main sources of power and produce remarkable results, even in Iran, Burma, the Philippines, and the Palestinian Territories.“

”And there’s more. This trend has been increasing over time—in the last fifty years civil resistance has become increasingly frequent and effective, whereas violent insurgencies have become increasingly rare and unsuccessful. This is true even in extremely repressive, authoritarian conditions where we might expect nonviolent resistance to fail“

” . . . campaigns that relied solely on nonviolent methods were on average four times larger than the average violent campaign. And they were often much more representative in terms of gender, age, race, political party, class, and urban-rural distinctions.“

She says in her blog that she was challenged at an academic workshop of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, where her view of nonviolence was that "all this stuff" was well-intentioned, but dangerously naïve. Challenged to prove her view, she collected “data on all major nonviolent and violent campaigns for the overthrow of a government or territorial liberation since 1900. The data cover the entire world and include every known campaign that consists of at least a thousand observed participants, which constitutes hundreds of cases.”

Formidable. She was selected one of the magazine *Foreign Policy's* 100 Leading Global Thinkers last month. Making findings that went against her initial thinking!

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Quaker Pilgrimage?

There are such things, though they differ from many religious pilgrimages, for instance to Bethlehem. The Quaker Youth Pilgrimage is a long standing ministry which helps young people aged between 16 and 18 to explore their Quaker roots. In the past, the Pilgrimage was organized jointly by the Europe & Middle East Section and the Section of the Americas of FWCC, the world body of Friends. They do not visit sacred places but ones of

historic and current interest to Quakers.

The most recent Pilgrimage in July-August 2012 began in Birmingham, UK, with homestays with local Friends, and then community building exercises at Woodbrooke, the British equivalent of Pendle Hill. Once again, Pilgrims visited "1652 Country", going to many Meeting Houses and places of historical significance. They then traveled to Brussels to learn more about the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), and from there on to The Netherlands, where they participated in Alternative to Violence workshops and visited Amsterdam. An overnight ferry brought them back to Newcastle in the UK. They worked for a few days at Barmoor, in the beautiful North Yorkshire Moors, and completed their month together at the Bilberry Hill Centre in Birmingham with a closing retreat.

So the pilgrimages involve service for peace and justice in addition to historical, not sacred, sites. Suppose the Anglican church proposed to build a church on Pendle Hill, where George Fox had a vision of many people coming to Christ? There would, no doubt, be a

protest, but Pendle Hill is more a symbol than a locality, the latter not sacred. It was in 1652 that Fox climbed Pendle Hill.

In 2014 the pilgrimage will be to Peru and Bolivia.

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Forced labour is being prevented under US government contracts;

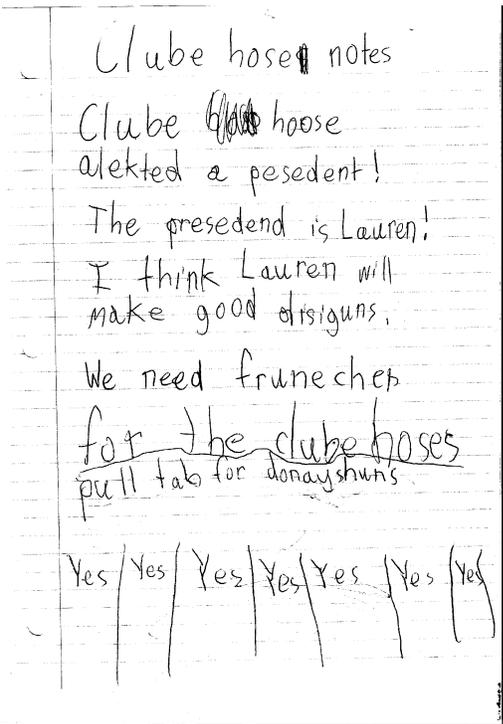
Modern slavery has been criminalised in Australia;

Trafficking victims in the US continue to receive protection and support;

International media was abuzz with news of Walk Free activists dressed up as video characters to deliver petitions to Nintendo;

FIFA pledged to keep modern slavery out of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

A Clubhouse?



This notice has been written by one of our members and pinned to our notice board.

We hope that the relevant committees will take note.

Where is this clube hose? Perhaps in the big section of concrete pipe Marian persuaded a contractor to leave behind, and even to move it to where she chose? If so, how is it to be fruneched?

It would be a source of fun for children in the neighborhood, but unfortunately it would constitute an "attractive hazard," a feature disliked by insurance, and would have to be safely protected from informally visiting children. We remember seeing Lauren and Piper struggling to climb on it, Piper, a climber, almost succeeding, and descending well, feet first.

I'm sure we welcome announcements from younger members.

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.

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