

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

January 2016

FACING VIOLENCE: A LOVING PLAN OF ACTION

How can we face an immediate violent threat effectively? What can we do to protect ourselves and our loved ones while still acting out of love rather than hate? At a forum held in December, San Antonio Friends entered into a worship-sharing session on how to face the possibility of “active shooters” in our midst – one or more individuals who may appear with weapons and the obvious intent to kill everyone around them. The media bombard us with constant stories of these events and potential threats, and with outcries for retaliation against such individuals – especially if the individuals are perceived to be members of 'terrorist' groups.

For all of us, these appalling acts and repeated public focus on ways to prevent them can lead to a sense of chronic fear for our lives and those of our loved ones. How can we maintain a sense of trust in people whom we do not personally know – whom we encounter in public places and welcome into our places of worship? In order to address this dilemma and identify effective ways of protecting our personal safety while not descending into hateful attitudes and aggressive plans for retaliation, each participant in our worship-sharing session considered these questions:

- What am I afraid of?
- What do I do in daily life to prepare for an emergency/crisis/threat of violence?
- How can I manage the physical reactions of panic or rage that a threat might provoke in me?
- How can we learn to face/approach/embrace someone who frightens us?

The final question – how to face a frightening person or situation – could not be fully addressed in the time available for our worship-sharing, but can be studied both individually and in future group discussions. What we

Calendar

- 3. Sunday Potluck lunch at 11.30 a.m.. Prepare for State of the Meeting report
- 10. Sunday Forum, 11.30 –Working to Overcome Racism: New Perspectives, with Val
- 12, Tuesday, Study Group, 6 pm, (see below)
- 16. Saturday, 9.00 am-1.00 pm meditation, with Plum Branch Sangha.
- 17. Sunday..... Meeting for Business, 11.30.
- 24, Sunday Forum, 11/30 –Update on RAICES Efforts to Meet Needs of Refugees .
- 27. Wednesday Mid-week Meeting, 7.00, Gary’s home.
- 30. Saturday .. Silent Retreat, 9.30am-3.00om, Bag lunch..
- 31. Sunday Forum –

Denise had a hip replacement. She says it was “ it was an up and down 5 days in the hospital,” but she now says, “Hip seems to be functioning well, PTs in hospital were pleased with my progress.” And she’s getting over their pain, with medical help.

Janet W. Says, “ in January, I will be moving into a retirement home in Mexico so that I can be close to my son and daughter in law. You can see what it is like if you look at web page on Lake Chapala. Also, ask Val----- she knows about it.

Blessings and good thoughts,

Janet ” And our blessings go with you, Janet

Gary and Vivian went to Dallas to be with Gary’s sister, who is severely ill with cancer. Then the dreadful weather swept over. He says, “We were in the midst of things, in fact the weather radar let us know that the tornadoes were passing directly overhead of us and we were all huddled in closets, with the sirens going off in downtown Dallas....we were very lucky, given some of the devastation around us... the reality of it passing directly overhead (we had a 5-minute period in which we knew we very very much at risk; amazing what they can do to directly track these things these days) was no casual event....great relief afterwards, also laughed about our shared closet experience...so,Happy New Year!...”

Janaki is in the social work program at grad school at Bryn Mawr, happily preparing for marriage, and writing novels (plural!). She says: “During my time here at Pendle Hill, I will be working on turning the third draft of “Graduation” into something that can be shared with the world. Several years ago, I heard the call of Spirit telling me to write my life into being. As I write about the themes of trauma, hope, identity, and loss, I am writing myself into being. Every novel I write changes me; every novel makes me more me. Writing is a spiritual journey into myself and into the world.” (Sha has now completed her time at Pendle Hill.)

Silent Retreat, January 30, 2016

“ Stand still in that which is pure...”

George Fox 1624 -1691

For the 4th year, as a means of deepening our worship and ministry, there will be a Silent Retreat at the Meetinghouse on January 30, 2016. The schedule for the day will be as follows:

09:30	Arrival
09:45 --10:00	Introduction – Gary Whiting
10:00 --11:00	Silent Worship
11:00 --12:00	Active Silence
12:00 – 12:45	Silent Lunch
12:45 -- 1:15	Active Silence
1:15 – 2:15	Silent Worship
2:15 -- 2:30	Break
2:30 – 3:00/later	Gather back into Meeting Room, silence leading into Quaker dialogue (worship sharing) on the experience and other insights and reflections.

Soup, coffee, tea, and bottled water will be provided. Friends are asked to bring a brown bag lunch, something to write in if you wish, something to read or knit, walking shoes, and the like. Childcare will not be available. Friends can attend all or part of the retreat. Further updates will be posted on the website. Ask James or Gary

Business Meeting

Meeting for Business commenced with an advice of Margaret Mead:
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Ministry and Oversight Committee was concerned about members' last wishes, which are stored in the meetinghouse and must be easily found when needed. A retreat will be held in January. A letter of introduction was read for Kristal and Ted M, who have moved here. They were welcomed to Meeting.

The Treasurer presented a draft budget for 2016, greater than last year's. Last month's report was not unusual, though the article in Friends Journal on the refugee situation had produced a generous response from Friends elsewhere.

The Property Committee report was concerned with security. Among other problems, a screen has been pulled off a window and children appear to have trodden down some plants. Among the precautions suggested was that some members might stay overnight. Among the solutions was that there should be a resident on the property. There is a need for friendly relations with La Fiesta residents.

The Nominating Committee was principally concerned with the paucity of members on M&O. This committee's responsibilities were discussed. Jim suggested that a short forum be held after the January potluck, to consider the State of the Meeting Report.

Need for guidance was felt on ways to show Friends' solidarity with local Islamic groups in potential harm's way. A group of Friends was asked to consider this and report back.

Friends interested in working with the children are asked to contact Leilah.

Meeting closed in silence.

Quakers and Continuing Revelation - Topic for Study Group, Jan 12, 2016, the second Tuesday

Ever since George Fox, Friends have rejected the idea that divine inspiration ended when the contents of the New Testament was established. But how do we determine what is divine and what is ego-driven? In all the noise of the world, how do we recognize truth and what deserves our attention and concern. As individuals? As a faith community?

Details: Pot Luck at 6:00pm+ and worship sharing 7:00pm+. Come when you can and stay as long as it fits. 623 Mission St., off Eagleland; 218 to Florida, left on St. Mary's, immediate right on Eagleland, right on Mission. More info, jmhaynes@earthlink.net

Refugees

David has given us the latest news about the situation of refugees coming across the border.. He stresses that contrary to myth, this number has been dropping over the past 5-7 years. This is due to less numbers from Mexico; those from Central America are increasing but they are small numbers by contrast. More mothers and families are fleeing violence; Honduras is the number one murder capital in the world. Other countries there are among the top eight.

Moreover, no immigrant across this border has been convicted of terrorism. Such acts are committed by legal entrants or US citizens. He gave examples.

While ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is considering deportations, RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services,) and IWC (Interfaith Welcome Coalition) contend that these migrants are seeking asylum and should not fall under ICE's enforcement policy. But the administration treats it as a border security problem. Crossing the border to seek asylum is not illegal

Dilley and Karnes represent another problem. ICE and Homeland Security are trying to have them declared safe places to hold children. This would require lowering Texas standards for many other situations, including daycare, foster homes, and schools. IWC went in December to protest before the head of the Health and Human Services Commission, which grants childcare

licenses. Over 100 spoke to this, including professional specialists and the US custodial union, with none opposing. The prisons are closed systems, with children's education, discipline, and security not liable to random inspections. Private prisons have banned babies' crawling, provided poor food, and insisted mothers carry infants.

But IWC, of which the Meeting is part is now organized for quick responses to new situations as they arise. Mothers must not be swept from violence into new nets of fear.

Eyes Wide Open: Joys and Sorrows of the 2016 Nominations

Grateful for and applying the message of Gary Whiting on 12/20, we present the Roster of Officers and Committees for 2016. The Joys are the many new names in our Meeting community who have accepted appointment to the responsibilities of their positions. Joy is also found in the many names continuing in their previous responsibilities. May each find joy in service and personal growth arising from that service. We find Sorrow in the gaps in Ministry and Oversight, Outreach, and Religious Education. We found no willing Friends for these positions. We ask that you do not turn your eyes away from the Sorrows, but reflect deeply on what it takes, corporately and personally, to grow and maintain a vibrant, Spirit-filled Friends Meeting. Gretchen and Bill S, Nominating Committee

Miscellany

Meeting held a Christmas Eve supper and meeting for worship. All those tamales , prepared by Bill, Denise, and family!

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In the last of those references provided by Carol B above, George Lakey describes actions taken by a (Black) teacher to prevent a gunman shooting. In it he says, "In no way do I mean to diminish how remarkable her intervention was. She was a hero, no doubt. But we don't need to let that fact make her actions seem more extraordinary than they were. I believe our job is not to let heroes make us feel smaller, but instead to learn from them and grow so that on a good day we, also, can pull off a saving grace."

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On the 16h from 9 am to 1.00 pm, Plum Branch Sangha will hold A Day of Mindfulness here, mediation with a potluck lunch and dharma talk; in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh.

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"We are in a moment of our public life when unease, even fear of violence penetrates our sense of well-being.

Now, more than ever, it is essential to give voice and witness to the values that we know build the common good — kindness, fairness, respect, gratitude, participation in a caring community. In our daily lives and in our hopes for our nation, we seek peace and justice. This is our work at FCNL."

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AFSC says, "As a Quaker organization, we at AFSC are compelled to speak out for policies and practices that respect the human dignity of every individual. This includes welcoming immigrants and refugees into the U.S. and working to end the violence and instability forcing millions of people to leave their homes."

And FCNL says, "Religious freedom is a core value of the founding of our country, enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Yet we have candidates running for president of the United States who speak publicly about denying access to this country based on religious belief. Quakers came to the U.S. 365 years ago to practice our faith openly, fleeing religious persecution. We have a

responsibility and opportunity right now to protect the religious freedom of Muslims facing a new wave of persecution here in the U.S.”

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Peace Direct reports that Croatia and Serbia, despite mutual political animosity, provided free train transportation for refugees, allowing them to bypass border crossing. “Once again, the humanity of ordinary people prevailed, transcending the ethnic and national borders that politicians constantly entrench.”

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The Network of Spiritual Progressives remarks, “Seeing and hearing the stories of Parisians who were impacted by the attacks is bringing the violence home in a way that is similar to 9-11. The media is bringing the lives and sorrows of Parisians into our homes with interviews, photos and stories of their lives. . This pierces the veil of security and safety in ways that the children washing up on the shores of Europe, starving children around the world and bodies in Beirut did not do.”

Those people suffering bombing and violent conflict in Syria do not move us, or at least not the media, in the way Paris has.

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To Janet and Ken, “Winchester” means a cathedral city. They went to college nearby. Founded in 642 but constructed anew by Normans in 1079, the medieval cathedral is the longest in Europe. The Winchester diocese was founded in the 7th century, when Christianity first came to England.

To Americans, “Winchester” means a rifle.

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“A senior executive with the second-largest for-profit prison company in America assured investment bankers last summer that despite talk of drug policy and criminal justice reform, the country will continue to “attract crime, ‘generating new “correctional needs.””
Needing more private prisons?

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Nicholas Kristof in the *NY Times*: “ In 1938 and again in 1941, one desperate Jewish family in Europe tried to gain refugee status in the United States but failed, along with countless thousands of others. That was Anne Frank’s family. . . .Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch, who has focused on refugees, says,. ‘By humiliating and rejecting those who are fleeing from ISIS, we create a sense of anger in much of the Middle East. The ultimate outcome of rejecting Syrian refugees is a propaganda victory for ISIS.”

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We know that the fate of bananas is of central concern to piece-loving Quakers. A soil-borne fungus threatens banana cultures around the world and is currently threatening up to 100,000 hectares in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Jordan, Pakistan and even nations as far as Mozambique. Bananas may become extinct.

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Quaker Voluntary Service has told us a Quaker proverb, “You lift me and I’ll lift thee and we’ll ascend together” Now the words are agreeable and even inspiring. But we never knew there was such a thing as a Quaker proverb..

But we have searched and discovered more, for instance, “Have faith and the way will open.” We’ve also found “Give hope. Give a goat.” (Was that Quaker?) But that doesn’t seem universal.

Here is one quoted from Minnesota: “To listen another soul into disclosure and discovery is the greatest service one human being can do for another.” Beyond that we keep coming across the one about way opening.

Are there any others hiding in the mists of memory?

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QVS also gives us a statement by Dan Seeger, “The blessing of peace.. will not be achieved because people have outraced each other in the building of armaments, nor because we have outmaneuvered each other in political action but because more and more people in a silent place in their hearts are turned to those eternal truths upon which all right living is based.”(Dan Seeger is a Friend.)

Yet, is it enough just to turn to that silent place?

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We neglected to mention it at the time, but we wish to now. Maury Maverick was a good Friend of Friends, acting for AFSC as attorney for COs during the Vietnam war. We miss his kind words in the Express-News now. But his widow, Celia, attended Quarterly Meeting. We hope she is well; she will understand how much we appreciated him..

### **AVP Diffuses Political Violence in Burundi & Transforms Hostile Relationships**

David Niyonzima, Executive Director, Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS)

“It all started with the protests. During these, some youths related to the opposition decided to search the houses of the families of Imbonerakure [militia aligned with the government] in an effort to find arms.3 grenades were found and given to the police. Because of this, the youth of the opposition angrily destroyed houses belonging to the Imbonerakure’s families as well as the ruling party’s centers. 870 t-shirts belonging to the ruling party’s campaign uniforms were burned.

The Imbonerakure considered this as aggression and they prepared a punitive attack . Imbonerakure got reinforcements from members of the ruling party from a neighboring commune,, and they attacked the youth of the opposition parties with sticks and stones. Many people were injured including one death of the Imbonerakure. Many youth on both sides were taken to hospitals and many others had fled.

THARS intervened when another attack was being prepared. THARS got the news about this and decided to go there with the objective of defusing the tension and preventing the attack.

After two AVP workshops with 40 participants from the groups who had participated in the violence, both the Imbonerakure and the youth of the opposition parties confirmed that the workshops had caused them to totally abandon the plan. They confirmed that they had resolved to seek dialogue on the questions that divided them instead of fighting.

The representatives of the protesters said that even if the protests would continue to put pressure on the president to give up his candidacy, they will not use violence because they have now understood that it does not solve problems but aggravates things. Even the Imbonerakure representatives expressed regret of launching the attack first and that they will not do it again. THARS thinks that even those who had fled might be able to return.

As participants wait for lunch, they discuss the conflicts that oppose them as well as the last violence The Imbonerakure and youth of the opposition exchange ideas with no incident. THARS AVP facilitators observed them with great interest. One of the achievements of the workshop was that each had an opportunity to express her/himself and allowed others to do the same.

During the self-esteem exercise, the participants found an opportunity to talk face to face, After the workshop the leaders of opposing groups gave speeches of appreciation for the AVP approach. They were amazed that the program could make them speak to each other easily!

The information that came to the THARS office is that youth from the two opposed parties are no longer sleeping outside to maintain security. AVP has enabled them to speak to each other after the workshops and they are no longer suspicious of each other.:"

Burundi is undergoing a great surge of violence. Read the newspaper.

## Waging Nonviolence

George Lakey says, "5 ways movements can handle threats and attacks": We'd attracted a dense crowd by street speaking against the Vietnam war. I got off the soapbox to allow someone else a turn. A young man in army uniform stepped in front of me. He was trembling with the effort to keep it together as he confronted me, barely a foot away. 'How can you protest the Vietnam war when we're over there to keep you free?' Then he showed me his knife. . . .

The young soldier gripping the knife seemed about to snap, so I looked steadily into his eyes. 'You don't want to do this,' I said quietly. 'You'll be in big trouble, and you won't stop us.' People around us were paying attention to the new speaker on the box. No one had noticed the knife yet. The soldier considered for a moment while we locked eyes, then put his knife away. . . .

During the 1950s Algerian struggle for independence, French pacifists had a rough time protesting their government's war. They faced assaults by police and civilians. They learned to shorten the attack and reduce injury by sitting on the ground when it began. They told me they memorized these words: 'When in doubt, sit down.' The tool was mirrored by the U.S. civil rights movement with success. . . .

Keeping the initiative is important. Being calm and restrained may not be enough – look for other moves you can make. As shown in the movie 'Freedom Song,' civil rights activists learned to go to each others' aid in non-threatening ways, like putting their bodies between the attacker and the demonstrator. . . . In fact, a disciplined action is itself a deterrent to violence. . . .

In 1964 I asked Bob Moses, head of Mississippi SNCC, how so many SNCC members survived. He told me, 'It's because we don't have guns in our freedom houses, and everyone knows it.'"

## Gun Violence

Friends in Columbia, Missouri, protest gun violence:

"A group of children led a ceremony in which they read names of some of those killed, and held lighted candles. We then had a procession outside, with most brightly dressed in orange, and ended up at the Grant School playground, where discussions and networking continued. This was part of a coordinated event in hundreds of communities, nationwide, challenging political leaders to take various actions to try to keep our families and communities safe from the proliferation of guns. With 88 Americans killed daily by guns, the goals of "EveryTown for Gun Safety" are:

- Pressuring lawmakers to improve our gun laws
- Raising awareness about gun violence
- Educating the public about common-sense gun laws and responsible gun ownership
- Mobilizing grassroots supporters
- Connecting and amplifying the voices of survivors of gun violence

This local effort welcomes more participation, and plans another meeting on January 21st."

## FCNL Survey of 2015

This was a big year. Here are some of the key themes I saw in 2015:

\*Diplomacy works! From the nuclear deal with Iran, to the international climate accord in Paris, diplomats proved again and again the power of working with the rest of the world. Next up:

#pivot2peace.

\*Playing defense: For some of our issues, we went into 2015 knowing it would be an uphill climb. But many of the worst policy proposals -- including the recent one that would have effectively blocked Syrian refugees from coming to the U.S. -- didn't make it into law. We even had some forward movement on these issues; this month, Congress made key provisions of the Earned Income Tax Credit permanent.

\*Islamophobia and racism: Fear and prejudice governed much of 2015. Far too often, those feelings mutated into violence and bad policy. We are better than this.

\*Constant campaigning: If your inbox is anything like mine, you've already gotten 20 political emails today. The campaign season is already in full swing, and it'll only get more intense in 2016 -- which means it's a great time to start building relationships with candidates.

\*Surprising partnerships: Sen. Chuck Grassley, a vocal critic of the Smarter Sentencing Act, is now leading a bipartisan bill to reform sentencing. And a group of Republicans in the House, led by Rep. Chris Gibson, are taking a public stand on climate science.

\*What happened in 2015 that changed how you see the world? What hope do you have for 2016?

Until next year,

Chris Letts, Communications Associate

## **Listening to Life<sup>9</sup>**

Philip Gulley

Demanding has never worked too well for me. I tried it once, early in our marriage, but it didn't go over. Joan put me in a headlock. I tried it again this past week, with our new dog. She jumped up on our bed to sleep with us. I demanded that she get down. I said, "Maisy, get down!" but then Joan said, "Oh, it's alright, baby girl, you come sleep by me." So you can see where demanding something got me. If a man is going to demand something, it helps if his wife goes along with the program, because if she doesn't he's pretty well sunk. The dog stuck out its tongue at me and went to sleep on my head. . . .

Force may subdue, but love gains.

Don't you wish that could catch on? It could, you know.

You and I could decide right now to see what love could do.

With our children.

With our siblings.

With our parents.

With our spouses.

With our neighbors.

With one another.

Holy cats, maybe we could even see what love could do with these angry, bitter folks who think they can get their way by blowing things up. Wouldn't that be something, to see what love could do with them?

To see what love could do with politicians whose first reaction is to blow entire countries off the map.

To see what love could do with troubled young men whose homelands are so racked, ripped, and ruined by violence they've come to believe it's the answer to everything.

Wouldn't that be something, to see what love could do with them?

It'll take someone brave to suggest such an audacious solution. It would take someone like Jesus to suggest that. I'm not suggesting it. I'm not brave enough. People would get mad at me. But wouldn't it be interesting if someone did, if someone just woke up tomorrow

morning and said, "Today, I'm going to see what love will do."

That's from Phil Gulley, the Quaker pastor from Indiana. It's from his blog. He may not be able to demand, but he can blog:

<http://www.philipgulley.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Listening-to-Life-9.pdf>

## **Glumps... Life, Death, Eternity, and Everything**

Karl, at his current exhibition at REM Galery;

"To attempt sparks while remaining grounded:

Pop as an invitation to contemplation."

I've realized that my creative break throughs come through forming the right questions about my work, about my creativity, and about my own willingness to explore and potentially fail. The real content of a piece of my art is my state of being, my state of attention as I make it.

I am intensely interested in our shared visual abundance. The endless tide of images (and the processes they represent) in our collective art history and hierarchies of commerce continue to captivate me and infuse my world-view. I seek to understand how this cultural bounty is perceived and appreciated by its audience and how it is sometimes ignored and left for dead on the aesthetic landscape.

I function as a sponge. I absorb the flowing host of imagery and innately encapsulate and organize trends, themes, narratives, and methodologies into archetypes of my own imagining. Certain aesthetic patterns, color choices, textures, and tendencies of design lead the way but inevitably form the authorities I rebel against.

As I am saturated, these influences leak out as drops on the page. I nurture these impulses, not fully knowing how they will mature but trusting in their inspirations and the process of their origins. They are spilled and explored, each in their turn. The next is waiting at the surface just as the last undercurrent is attempting to be absorbed.

### **Query for January**

If you were to "Let your Life Speak", how would people know you were a Quaker without your literally saying it?

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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