

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

January 2014

HOLDING SOMEONE IN THE LIGHT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Many times in the period of meeting for worship in which we share joys and sorrows, we will be asked to “hold someone in the Light.” This old Quaker phrase may hold different meaning for different people, however. Below are personal thoughts from five members of the [Ann Arbor] Committee on Ministry and Counsel on “what it means to hold someone in the Light.”.....

Many years ago at a Young Friends gathering I heard someone speak on prayer. He said he had started out with one-word prayers, “thanks” and “help,” and proceeded to two-word prayers saying the name of God and the name of someone he thought needed God’s special attention, for example “God. . . John,” “God . . . John.” I think of holding someone in the Light as being the same as those two-word prayers. I also like to envision someone in need of God’s special attention as literally being bathed in golden Light. When I hold someone in the Light I take a few minutes and focus on the person either with a two-word prayer or envisioning that person bathed in Light, or simply take a few moments of silent worship focusing on their name or envisioning their face.

My feelings concerning holding others in the light are shaped by my lack of belief in a God that directly intervenes in human lives. As a result of this belief I think of holding others in the light primarily in terms of the impact of it on my own attitudes and behaviors, and then, indirectly, on the attitudes and behaviors of others I interact with.

When I'm asked to hold someone in the Light, my immediate response is to picture them surrounded by a kind of halo of light as I pray for their well-being. I hope, then, that I will continue to think of them during the coming week and month, again praying that they will be well/healed or whatever is needed. I interpret "holding" to mean "carrying," so my intention is to carry concern and love for them over a period of time. At times this concern might transform into a practical act (taking a meal, making a phone call, sending a card). This is much harder, of course, if someone has asked us to "hold my mother's best friend's secretary in the Light" or if the speaker is someone I don't know by name. It is also hard when there are more

Calendar

5. Sunday
Potluck lunch at 11.30.

12 Sunday
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

19, Sunday.....
Silent Retreat, 9.30-3.30

26, Sunday
State of the Meeting report for SCYM

requests than I can "process," and in that case I leave the "holding" to someone else.

I find holding others in the light of most value when it directs my own actions in more God-mindful channels. Holding others in the light helps keep balance in my life and nudges me towards a spiritual concept of right living. My actions are more informed by the inner light. This in turn translates to attitudes and behaviors towards others which may assist them in more effectively dealing in positive, constructive and spiritual ways with the difficulties facing them.

I once asked Dorothy Steere this question at Radnor Meeting. Her answer has been my image ever since. When making a bed and fluffing the sheet over the bed, as it billows out, Dorothy imagined that as God's hands and she gently placed a person on that sheet. As they lightly rested surrounded by a billowing sheet in her mind, she imagined God holding them gently, surrounding them with light and love. It's now what I imagine too.

Readings for Reflection: August 2003, from the Ann Arbor Meeting Committee on Ministry and Counsel Reprinted here by permission of the Friends Meeting, Ann Arbor.



Note . . .

Note the calendar. Meeting will hold a silent retreat on the 19th January (see below.) So Meeting for Business will be held on the second Sunday this month, the 12th January. But the normal meeting for worship will be held on the 19th. On the 26th we shall be considering our State of the Meeting Report to Yearly Meeting.

The Sunday Retreat

You are invited to a silent retreat at the Meeting House. Quotes from peace makers of social justice such as Martin Luther king, Gandhi, and Quakers will be on the covered patio outside the meeting room. At times quotes from the peace makers will be read into the silence to be a part of our centering and our healing and hopefully for the healing of society.

WHEN: January 19, a Sunday, from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (but see at end)

WHAT to BRING: A brown bag lunch, a journal or something to write in if you wish, something to read or knit, walking shoes.

Child care will be provided for until 12:30 pm, just as on any other Sunday. We ask parents to share lunch with their children. After 12:30pm due to nap time for others and the length of the retreat, parents will be responsible for their own children.

If you cannot come for the entire silent retreat, please come for any part of the silent retreat that you can. As this Silent Retreat is on a Sunday, regular meeting for worship will be at 10 am to 11 am. Those only attending meeting for worship are welcome to join the silence in progress. There will be a natural break at 11 am for the silent retreat and for those only attending meeting for worship.

Time schedule:

9:15 am: Gather in the meeting room and start with 15 minutes of silence. Open silence briefly to go over the schedule, answer any questions and present a brief talk and sharing on Silence for the Spiritual Journey moderated by Gary Whiting.

9:45 am -11 am: Silent Worship. A quote from Martin Luther King, Jr will be read into the silence. A second quote from a peace maker will be read into as moved to do so. As always people may speak from the silence again as they are moved to speak.

11 am – 11:50 am: Active Silence: "Active silence" is an opportunity to do anything that helps you focus on your soul-work and will not make it harder for someone else to do the same! Of course, you can continue in silence. If you have a soul-work task that requires a laptop, bring it along. Going for a silent walk around the grounds or in the neighborhood is an option; so is writing a very special letter to someone you love, or writing in your journal, or crocheting.

12 pm – 12:45 pm: Silent brown bag lunch. The meeting will furnish hot water, tea, coffee, lemon aid, orange drink, etc.

12:45 pm - 1:15 pm: Active silence:

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm: Silent worship in the meeting room.

Read a quote from a peace maker into the silence.

2:30 – 2:45 pm: Break

2:45pm – 3:30 pm: Gather back into the meeting room. Worship sharing where anyone can speak to the meaning of the day's silent retreat for them including messages concerning peace in the face of violence. Close in Silence.

Friends need to know that we need their help at the beginning of the day (maybe 8:30am) for several things:

1. Need help from those who would like to make posters of quotes to go outside the meeting room. Good hand writing not necessary but a bonus.
2. Need some folks to help set up the Retreat, putting up posters, setting up meeting room, setting up drinks, coffee, treats for the breaks, etc.

Personal News

Quakerbooks December "Book Newsings" came out as "Seasonal Gift Ideas from Graham Garner with help from Janaki Spickard-Keeler," Jim's daughter. Thank you, Janaki and a Happy New Year! Meredith, Jim's wife, and Janaki were also at the Christmas Eve meeting. Janet and Ken's granddaughter is a grad student at Hamline in St. Paul's, Minnesota. She organized "raising/making 117 blankets for the Dorothy Day Center" She's very active. Their son, Paul, and daughter Jane visited them in early December. Granddaughter Beth is on a honeymoon in China! Marian's daughter Susan has been admitted into long-term care after suffering another sickness. Marian is proud of her for her resilience.

We received a message that Denise had "updated her status." Denise, what higher status do you really want? Have you been promoted to Brigadier? Is Bill in agreement? And Jocelyn is at it, too! They're all moving up.

Sharon has moved to California. She says "I have arrived in Berkeley, although my furniture has not yet made it. Today I took title to my new apartment close to the UC campus. My apartment is on the fifth floor, facing the Berkeley hills, and it was a great pleasure to sit in my empty rooms and look out on the fog coming down in the hills. It is a drastic change for me, living in the bustle of a dense urban area like central Berkeley. " Her email address is unchanged.

We were happy to see Rese and all his and Susan's children together at Christmastime. Suzanne's husband was at the Christmas Eve meeting and we were happy also to see Joe, Jocelyn, Neil, and Pam.

So, what about your daughters and granddaughters? Let us know.

Meeting

We held another Forum on the Joy of Committees at the end of December, this time more focused on the actual committees. We are still too small a Meeting, and of Friends with some experience, to be able easily to fill all the committee memberships and to do all the tasks needed to run smoothly. With some early emphasis on the community-enhancing experience of joining others on a committee, the forum moved to considering what the various committees, Outreach (as much inreach,) Grounds, Building, Religious Education, Finance, Peace and Social Concerns, and Ministry and Oversight, actually do.

It was suggested that some routine activities, such as answering the Meeting telephone, greeting visitors, and – making the coffee on Sundays, might be done by volunteers who do not actually join and meet with the committee. If so, how are they to be recruited and coordinated? Can Grounds and Building Committees be merged? Should we rely on supervised contractors? Can the responsibilities of Outreach be more equitably distributed, and perhaps Out- and In-reach be separated? There was general agreement that in order to ensure that two background-checked people are always with the children, we should seek to employ another. And how can we enhance the depth of our community?

December Business Meeting

Meeting for Business commenced with these words of Philadelphia Yearly meeting: *Friends symbolize by their very lack of symbols the essentially inward nature of the sacraments. However, just as rituals and forms may become ends in themselves and thus diminished in spiritual power, so may doctrinaire repudiation of form and ritual become an end in itself, devoid of life.*

The Clerk announced that the sign at the corner of New Braunfels must be taken down as the post was erected by the Presbyterian Church, which needs to use it again. The auditors have completed the audit of the 2012 accounts, finding no irregularities. The Nominating Committee report proposed the names of Trustees for 2014, to be seasoned and approved in January. The committee is awaiting clarification as to any new form to be taken by committees in 2014. But the Outreach and Religious Education Committees need help now. Please speak to Beth and Leilah, clerks.

The Outreach Committee report focused on the need for reconsideration of committee responsibilities. It emphasized particularly, the issues of childcare, greeting, and building and grounds maintenance. The P&SC report listed possible topics for forums in 2014: practical and philosophical problems of nonviolence; LGBT equality in San Antonio; being transgender; and racism. The committee hopes to show films outdoors. It approved donations in 2014 to the same organizations as in 2013 and is considering the allocation of new funds.

The Finance committee report recommended that half the return each year from the Friends Fiduciary Consolidated Fund be reinvested and half paid to Meeting to be used for benefitting the wider community. This must be approved by Meeting later.

The Treasurer reported that a donation was received, designated for payment of a large tree-maintenance bill in November. The Meeting Clerk has purchased a printer for Meeting's use. Two payments have been received from the Meeting's insurer, one a refund and the other a dividend. But our expenses are considerably above budget and we have not yet achieved a positive balance on the year.

Meeting closed in silence.

The Spirit of Christmas - NORAD

William Rivers Pitt, in *Truthout*, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/20441-top-gun-santa>, says this nearly sent him around the

bend, saying, that “for the first time in history, children who see this nonsense will go to bed on Christmas Eve worried that someone might try to kill Santa Claus, an idea that no kid anywhere has ever been required to encompass. . . .”

As Santa streaks through the sky this Christmas Eve, Rudolph merrily guiding the way, he will be flanked by some new and unusual companions: a jet-fighter escort, bristling with missiles. That is the twist that - to the dismay of at least some child advocates - the US military has chosen to put on this year's version of its traditional animated tracking of the yuletide journey. This year's updated segment, now previewing on the military's website, depicts Santa soaring over snow-capped peaks with military aircraft keeping pace on either side.

Adding the jets is ‘part of our effort to give the program more of an operational feel,’ said Navy Captain Jeff A. Davis, a spokesman for the command that sponsors the event, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, also known as NORAD.

You really have to see this turd to believe it. The martial drumming, the terrible graphics, the cameras and radar stations surveilling everything, and of course, the war weapons on Santa's six. You'd think the "defense" industry would treat Santa with more dignity. He knows if you are sleeping, he knows if you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so for goodness sake, the guy should be on retainer with the NSA.”

From FGC

That is, Friends General Conference, the staff of which sends wishes for a joyful new year.

“From the hundreds of volunteers who make the Gathering possible, to everyone who has found inspiration in a book from QuakerBooks,

From the dedicated Friends who give their weekends to help strengthen meetings through Quaker Quest and Traveling Ministries, to those meetings who have made their web presence more Friendly with the Quaker Cloud,

From meetings becoming more welcoming to young people and people of color through FGC resources, to those Spirit-led Friends creating new worship groups with the New Meetings Project,

FGC and the Religious Society of Friends are stronger because of you.”

Miscellany

Are we all being deluged by far more hopeful requests for donations than we can ever meet? They come by mail and by e-mail, daily, hourly. How can we deny the needs of pitifully deformed children across the world, women striving to support their families in refugee camps, children in sexual slavery, campaigns to elect a worthy someone, or to reduce the deluge of guns? We have already donated; can we do more?

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“When I went to the West Bank, I came back filled with optimism. Because when we recognize the fundamental humanity of all people, we are unstoppable.”

Going to the West Bank for the first time convinced Estee Chandler, daughter of an Israeli father, of the essential truth at the core of Jewish Voice for Peace: that recognizing the equal humanity of all people is fundamental to the Jewish tradition.

She met “so many beautiful, courageous families living under horribly oppressive conditions, with dignity and joy for each new day. It was an experience that left me forever changed.”

You can find out more at [info@jewishvoiceforpeace.org](mailto:info@jewishvoiceforpeace.org). We must be thankful she did not meet members of Hamas out to threaten her and all Israelis.

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Among prominent Quakers: "Nixon was awkward on the [golf] course and a cheat."
This from the *New York Times*.

And from Pendle Hill: "Live near Pendle Hill? Take an enriching winter course!" He should have done that.

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. A monthly selection of the best new research and resources on local peacebuilding worldwide, is chosen by *Insight on Conflict*. This month's edition features articles on new technologies in peacebuilding, the impact of fraud on post-election violence, and more. Sign up at [www.insightonconflict.org](http://www.insightonconflict.org) to receive the newsletter by email each month or email [joel@insightonconflict.org](mailto:joel@insightonconflict.org).

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The Monk parakeet, sometimes called the Quaker Parrakeet,, is at times found in aviaries, but it does not prove to be an overall popular species. While it breeds reasonably well in captivity, it lacks popularity because of its lack of marked color and its rejection of humans.

From Aviculture – "a fairly noisy parakeet with unpleasant squeaking sound, can be kept in flock.. Flight swift with rapid wingbeats, accompanied with constant screeching, call shrill screech or constant chattering."

We don't recall Quakers ever breeding in captivity. But we do screech sometimes. But – slavery! You can buy Quakers at Pet Works! Who buys? Episcopalians?

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According to figures quoted by Right Sharing, if the whole world were right now to achieve an "American" standard of living, the amount of petroleum needed would be five times the present production (our calculation.) We need to think about this.

Forty years ago a writer predicted that Americans were so addicted to their large cars that there was no way smaller, less gas-guzzling, cars would become popular. He was wrong, so beneficial change is possible. As Friends, we know the need for the rest of the world to grow equal to Americans in their economic well-being. But without radical change of some sort, much technological, Americans must accept, even appreciate and value, a lower standard.

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Pope Francis has advocated "fraternity" among all peoples. Yet that word is masculine, just as he then spoke of the Fatherhood of God. How do we get away from all these gender- tainted words? In phrases such as "when a person needs such-and-such, he must . . ." we now substitute "she" randomly to equalize things. But we still haven't really gotten rid of gender, just mixed it a bit. Not like the Malays, for whom "dia" has no gender, meaning "he" or "she", "him" or "her."

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Is God a man? Is Santa Claus white? Is Jesus white? Was Jesus a Christian?

## **The Albert Einstein Institution**

The institution has a new newsletter at:  
<http://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/PC-Newsletter>.

Jamila Raqib received the Salem State University, Champion of Peace Award on behalf of Gene Sharp, the Institution's founder, on International Peace Day, Friday 21st September.

The citation reads, "Salem State University honors Gene Sharp, For your faith in nonviolent struggle and your forceful authorship which offer truly creative pathways to peace. The award was presented by Professor Hope of Salem University, Peace Studies Department. The University is in Salem, West Virginia.

## Recent Uses of Nonviolence Around the World

From December through February, thousands of Indian citizens denounced their government's response to gang rape and successfully gained increased punishment for sexual crimes in India.

In May, a large sit-in took place in Gezi Park, Turkey, where many continue to protest for environmental and political change.

This summer in Brazil, millions protested against a rise in transportation costs and lack of government investment in public services.

In Cambodia, a campaign of mass demonstrations began after allegations of widespread electoral fraud and irregularities in July's general election.

Anti-coup demonstrators have been protesting in Egypt despite a harsh crackdown in August and attempts by the government to make protest illegal.

In Colombia, farmers blocked roads and highways to take a stand against government neglect throughout August and September.

In Sudan, large demonstrations and marches led to a government crackdown after President Omar Al-Bashir announced a cut of the nation's fuel subsidy in late September.

Women in Saudi Arabia defied the ban on driving despite government threats on October 26.

Thousands gathered on November 9 to protest against President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela.

In Bahrain, demonstrations by opposition groups continue against the ruling government.

In Thailand, thousands have been marching and occupying buildings to show their discontent with Prime Minister Yingluck.

In Bulgaria, students continue to occupy universities and gather around parliament, calling for government leaders to resign.

Anti-fracking demonstrations have become frequent around the world, particularly in Canada where local communities have been demonstrating against oil companies.

Hundreds of thousands have been demonstrating in Ukraine after President Yanukovich rejected an EU trade deal.

These instances are taken from the Einstein Institution's newsletter.

## Nonviolence Research

In September 2013, the Albert Einstein Institution established a new Research Program to document how nonviolent action is being used in diverse conflicts worldwide. The results of this research "will allow us to assess the resource needs of groups engaged in rapidly changing conflicts around the world and move quickly to prepare new translations, printings, and other educational resources specific to those needs."

In addition to its practical value for groups engaged in struggles, this high-quality, relevant information can assist in further research in the field.

The Research Program examines issues such as:

- In what circumstances is it being applied?
- What factors are contributing to its successes or to its failures?
- How is its application being improved and being made more effective?
- To what extent is nonviolent action being strategically planned?
- How are nonviolent methods being innovated by resisters?
- How are authoritarian governments and other opponents employing counter-revolutionary strategies, tactics, and methods?

## Death as a Penalty

“In June this year Texas marked a solemn moment in criminal justice history when it executed its 500th inmate since resuming capital punishment in 1982. Over coffee, on a misty November morning in Houston, Reverend Richard Lopez tells me he has witnessed nearly a hundred such deaths. Like Sister Helen Prejean he has stood by the side of the condemned, shared their last meal, laid one hand on their ankle as the lethal fluid is administered -- and prayed for God's grace.

As he recounts the stories of several of the men who he has attended to, he frequently falters, his eyes thick with emotion. Here is a man still deeply troubled by what he has witnessed. His original calling was to offer solace to the condemned, encourage repentance and show the way to God's forgiveness. Even the hardest and most brutal of men have softened to Rev. Lopez's gentle kindness. He went on to create support systems for the families who come to witness their loved one's last moments. Observing how devastated the mothers were as they watched their adult children move rapidly from a state of relative health to sudden death, he also created a system whereby family members could immediately after the execution visit the funeral home to say their good-byes in privacy.”

Marina Cantacuzino, *Huff-Post Crime*

When men have committed dreadful crimes, they undoubtedly deserve to suffer what they have inflicted on others. But if we condone this, we are authorizing similar dreadful acts and requiring someone else to commit them. And the families of the condemned men have to suffer through 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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