

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

July 2016

The well of love...

Liberal Quakers don't these days tend to use the name of Jesus Christ at all freely, which can be disorienting for those – like myself* – who have joined Friends after having been members of other churches.

Needless to say, there is no official Quaker Christology, just as there are no Quaker creeds or statements of faith. But early Quakers were entirely comfortable with the name of Christ, and with the prevailing understanding of him as saviour. As Lewis Benson writes, in *A Revolutionary Gospel*:

The early Quakers were not a reforming movement within the framework of a commonly shared belief in Christ as savior. They were in revolt against what the churches were teaching about salvation by Christ. They claimed that the churches' teaching had separated belief in Christ as savior from the call of God for righteousness. Belief in Christ had become divorced from obedience in righteousness. Fox said that the belief of his Calvinist contemporaries was an "unsanctifying belief," by which he meant that it left the believer still captive to sin and a dweller in the life of unrighteousness. The Calvinist doctrine of "imputed righteousness" was rejected by the Quakers. They that have received Christ within, said Fox, "they witness the righteousness itself without imputation." The chief point of the controversy between Puritans and Quakers was whether Christ had the power to make men truly righteous as well as the power to forgive. This is a disagreement about that which is most fundamental in Christianity. It is a disagreement about how we experience Christ as savior. But the Quaker revolt was not directed solely against Calvinistic Puritanism. Before Calvin the Church of Rome had assumed the role of mediator of moral truth to its members, it set a standard of morality defined by the church and kept in force by the power of the church. The scandals that developed in the administration of this church-oriented morality were the occasion of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Looking back across the centuries of Christian history Fox was able to say, "The righteousness within and sanctification within hath been lost since the apostles' days," and "the sanctifying belief hath been lost since the apostles' days." Quaker faith is based in the experience of the Spirit in silent worship, and it is that Spirit which the early Quakers understood as the indwelling Christ.

The apostle Paul prayed that according to the riches of his glory,

Calendar

- 3. Sunday**
Potluck lunch at 11.30 a.m..

- 10. Sunday**
Forum – Hearing, Seeing, and Moving: Making Our Campus More Welcoming
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- 17. Sunday.....**
Meeting for Business, 11.30.

- 24, Sunday**
Forum – Effective Outreach Without Proselytizing,
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- 27. Wednesday**
Midweek Meeting, 7.00, Gary's home.

- 31, Sunday**
Forum - Knowing and Communicating Our Last Wishes,

[God] may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3.16-19)

It is this indwelling which the early Quakers understood by their experience of the Light. As William Penn wrote: “ The Light of Christ within, who is the Light of the world and so a light to you that tells you the truth of your condition, leads all that take heed unto it out of darkness into God’s marvellous light; for light grows upon the obedient. It is sown for the righteous and their way is a shining light that shines forth more and more to the perfect day.” (Quaker Faith and Practice 26.44)

Of course, the experience of the Light is far deeper than words. As Paul wrote elsewhere: “ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8.26-27)

It seems to me that Friends today, realising the inadequacy of language, and indeed of concepts (“notions” as the first Quakers would have said), quite rightly espouse an understanding of prayer and worship that are intentionally, rootedly apophatic**, despite occasional intersection with the spoken word in ministry. But even in this we are consistent with our spiritual ancestors. Isaac Penington wrote: “The sum and substance of true religion doth not stand in getting a notion of Christ’s righteousness, but in feeling the power of endless life, receiving the power, and being changed by the power. And where Christ is, there is his righteousness.”

Perhaps we need to be prepared to extend to each other that openness which we so readily extend to those of other backgrounds in faith, and allow each other freely to use whatever language springs from our hearts in worship, in full awareness of the inadequacy of any language or system, any knowing even, to express the actuality. What is there is unknowable. Anything any of us might say or think about God is partial, incomplete and misleading. God is not to be contained in our understanding, nor constrained by dimensionality. The love of God is all, and in all, and the well of love does not run dry. Paul again: “Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13.12-13)

*We regret that the words above come from an unknown source and we apologize for not being able to attribute them correctly.

** Apophatic theology is “an attempt to clarify religious experience and language about the Divine through discernment, gaining knowledge of what God is not (apophasis), rather than by describing what God is. The apophatic tradition is often, though not always, allied with the approach of mysticism, which focuses on a spontaneous or cultivated individual experience of the divine reality beyond the realm of ordinary perception, an experience often unmediated by the structures of traditional organized religion or by the conditioned role-playing and learned defensive behavior of the outer man”



Personal News

Gary and Vivian are back from two weeks on the Isle of Aran in Scotland. A hiking tour of the island, and they loved it, along with the people. And Bill and Pat are back from the Bahamas,

slightly different from Scotland, we understand. But they enjoyed it. Alice is back – from a honeymoon. We hope for a very long, happy and loving marriage for them both.

Business Meeting

Meeting for Business commenced with an advice of Martin Luther King:

The nonviolent resister must often express his protest through noncooperation or boycotts, but noncooperation and boycotts are not ends themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

Meeting opened in silence. The Clerk then spoke of her own concern that Friends should treat one another with tenderness and patience, the latter a quality she said she tended to lack.

The Treasurer expressed concern that contributions during the summer cover expenses. Property expenses were up in May. With improvements in technology, an assisted-hearing technique previously tried may now be operable. Jim is investigating. Meeting approved the appointment of Val to M&O Committee. Diane will step down as Recording Clerk and Gretchen will replace her temporarily.

JamesG reported that damage to glass from intruders has been repaired but graffiti have to be removed. Lighting in the walkway and on a tree were discussed and a motion sensor was suggested. It was suggested that a notice be placed in the area: “This is a safe place. Please do it no harm.”

Bill S will be attending the annual FCNL meeting in November and Friends approved his representing Meeting. The matter of Meeting’s representation by banners, etc., at public events was raised. Smaller banners or placards will be considered by P&SC Committee.

Meeting closed in silence.

Miscellany

Governor Cuomo of New York has created a blacklist of organizations which support Boycott, Divest, and Sanction against Israeli companies which profit from workplaces in the occupied territories. That list will include AFSC and presumably FFC, along with Jewish Voice for Peace, which is objecting strongly.

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On PBS there was a series centered on Inspector Morse, of Oxford. There is a new series of him as a young detective constable, Endeavour Morse. One week he has to investigate two deaths linked somehow to a supermarket, Richardson’s, founded by a Quaker ancestor two centuries ago. The Richardsons are still Quakers – we are taken to their very bare meetingroom. But they’re not good examples. The husband makes nasty remarks about the Shona people of Zimbabwe, and the wife tries to seduce Endeavour, in some sexy underwear, unsuccessfully. He was apparently raised as a Quaker.

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Stephen Zunes, a Friend and social scientist, has been attacking Hilary Clinton for “her indefensible militarism and disregard for human rights and international law or keep hammering away at her hawkish foreign policy agenda . . .” We cannot criticize this, but, as he observes, the choice of Donald Trump is perhaps worse. So he will now stop attacking her. This newsletter does not take sides in this, but opposes the policies he raises.

“I yearn for a life more whole and more complete. I yearn for connection with the Holy One of Blessing. I yearn for divine flow into and through my life. I yearn to be seen and to be known fully, by God and by human beings. I yearn for justice. I yearn for healing. I yearn to be able to make a difference. I yearn for a world redeemed.”

Orange daylilies stand,
their crowd of upturned faces
gazing at the sun.

My heart knows that yearning.
Every cell in my body
calls out for you.

Night falls: my petals close.
I hug myself, bereft.
I count the hours until dawn.

I am most beautiful
when your radiance
draws forth mine.

From velveteen rabbi, at <http://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/>.

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We find FLGBTQC – we have been accustomed to LG, and then B, but to these is now added T. Q, we can expect, but C? Not a category you have never heard of. . . . The whole stands for Friends Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns, Let’s hope it does not have to expand further, when last month the massacre at Orlando occurred.

That word “queer” was used at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a pejorative term for people of unusual sexual orientations. In the 1980s it was reclaimed by those people themselves as a badge of honor. Just as Quakers reclaimed “quaker.”

We read that FLGBTQC had intended to hold its summer meeting at Green Family Camp in Bruceville, where our YM holds its YM. But the camp was requisitioned by the US government to hold 600 illegal immigrant children (“minors” in officialese.) Regional retreats have been held with a focus on immigration issues.

Were there any gay Muslims killed in those shootings at Orlando?

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FCNL’s Exec. Sec. Ellen Talles tells us, “Together, we’ve played a critical role in keeping diplomacy moving forward despite the obstacles -- won a huge victory with President Obama’s executive order to renew the Atrocities Prevention Board -- moved Congress closer to passing federal sentencing reform -- stopped \$18 billion in funding for future wars. But there is more to do.”

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How much do we treasure and quote the words of our Quaker, or Christian, forebears? Reading the Jewish blog, Velveteen Rabbi, we see the love and reverence with which the Torah is quoted, with the experiences of Moshe (Moses) and the Israelites as they crossed Sinai, not merely forebears but the very ancestors of the Jewish readers.

We certainly treasure words of earlier Quakers, along with the Christianity of their religion. But the words from the Bible are carefully chosen to accord with the message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps his central message. More ancient texts which show God urging the Israelites to destroy their enemies, are not accepted. And Quakers have no Holy Days. Christ-

mas and Easter are holy, in principle just as are other days. This is a principle, though, that Quakers find difficult to observe.

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Recently we quoted Parker Palmer, a well-known Quaker writer. We find that what we quoted was from his blog, On Being., On Being's blog continues to help us reflect more wisely on the ISIS attacks: Quaker Parker Palmer asks us to vigorously question those who say the US is a Christian nation, at http://www.onbeing.org/blog/parker-palmer-america-is-not-and-cannot-be-a-christian-nation/8162?utm_source=On+Being+Newsletter&utm_campaign=e6b9669a47-20151128_indigo_girls_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1c66543c2f-e6b9669a47-66004965&mc_cid=e6b9669a47&mc_eid=02612def12.

We might describe this as a mouthful if we were ever tempted to mouth it.

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FCNL's office in DC has a banner facing the U.S. Senate reminding legislators of what matters. "Our message right now: #LoveThyNeighbor (No exceptions)."

Is it necessary to remind you that "FCNL" means Friends Committee on National Legislation, which lobbies for peace and justice issues ?

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Michael lerner, editor of *Tikkun*, says, "We at *Tikkun* reaffirm our commitment to the safety of and respect for the GLBTQ community.

"They" are "us"--we are both straight and gay and bi and trans, Jewish and Christian and Muslim and Buddhist and Hindu and earth-based religions of every variety, young and old, religious and secular humanists and atheists.

We will not let any sector of "us" get scared that the rest of us will abandon them. "

Religions of Violence?

In *Foreign Policy*, Julia Joffe, takes on Donald Trump's critique of Islam as a violent religion and Christianity one of peace. She points out that Christian nations initiated the Crusades, during which Jewish communities in their path were wiped out. "The Crusades are still a sore subject in the Muslim world." And the Holocaust occurred in Christian Europe only 70 years ago. Catholics and Protestants waged wars against each other and, we may add, witches were burned to death and heads hacked off.

If these were just a historical fluke for Christianity, she says, why cannot Islam receive the same consideration?

Lawrence Pintak, In another *FP* article, says, "anti-Muslim xenophobia is nothing new. America's fear of Islam is older than the republic itself. . . America's fear of Islam is older than the republic itself. . . In the 1600s, Cotton Mather, minister of Boston's Old North Church, fulminated against "Mahometan Turks and Moors, and Devils"

We are reminded that Friend Mary Fisher in 1657 visited and was favorably received by the ruler of the Ottoman empire to hear her words "from the great God." But she was not us. We have not done that and can't take credit for her action. What should we be doing now?

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

Our Children

There was a vigorous discussion of our Children's Sunday program and how it should be conducted, how children can get to know our adults, how adults might minister to children in meeting for worship, and how more parents can be attracted. We will try to obtain more information.

Mourning for Victims

Organized by the Pride Center of S.A., the candlelight vigil drew several hundred to mourn and celebrate the dead. Powerful poetry reminded us that not all violence against the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community is far removed. Bias exists at all levels of society in our beloved city.

As each name of the 49 fallen was read and the brief statement of each life was heard we answered, "Presente!" The youngest was 18, the oldest, 50.

The flame for each candle passed around until all were lit. Then hands sheltered the flickering flames and when one went out another bent in to relight it. It was a metaphor for the lives we had gathered to remember and a challenge to each of us to live out the messages of love.

Gretchen

Yet, how to compare the mourning for 49 lives distant and unknown, whose death was so untimely, cruel, and undeserved, with mourning the death of one, wellknown and much loved, whose life was fully lived and whose death one of fulfillment?

And what candles are there for those unnumbered killed this past week in Syria and Iraq? Their deaths were unknown and unreported, amid devastation, mourned only by those who knew and loved them. We mourn them in abstraction.

PeaceDirect Blog

This week saw the launch of the 2016 Global Peace Index (GPI) report, which made difficult reading for anyone in our sector working to build peace around the world. According to the report the world became less peaceful and more unequal in 2015, with the world's least peaceful countries seeing further conflict and violence.

The headline figures are stark. In 2015, terrorism was at an all-time high and the number of refugees and displaced people at a level not seen in 60 years. 79 countries became less peaceful. . . .

Peacebuilding and conflict prevention remains woefully underfunded, and yet investing in local peacebuilding ensures a little goes a long way. :At Peace Direct, we hope that the 2016 GPI report will draw attention to the urgent need to invest in peace – and stop the suffering for the thousands living and dying in violent conflict every year."

www.peacedirect.org/us/world-became-less-peace-ful

The Global Peace Index (GPI) is an attempt to measure the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness. It is the product of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and developed in consultation with an international panel of peace experts from peace institutes and think tanks with data collected and collated by the *Economist* Intelligence Unit."

AFSC

Shan Cretin, General Secretary, says, "As the American Friends Service Committee approaches its 100th anniversary in 2017, I am proud to reflect on all that we've accomplished. Founded during World War I to give young conscientious objectors ways to serve peacefully without joining the military and taking lives, AFSC has grown into an international organization that tirelessly advocates for marginalized people. The principles of our past continue to influence our work today, as we address the root causes of violence and oppression to champion peace with lasting justice."

She goes on, of course, to say that AFSC needs more resources, i.e., money, to continue its work.

Israel & Palestine

Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta, from Vancouver, gave a talk on Palestinians and Israelis last month. This is an extremely important subject but we have no account of what she said. We will try to correct this next month.

Quakers and Trident

"Quakers in Britain strongly disagree with the conclusion of a report published July 1 that says the UK should retain its nuclear deterrent.

A group of former ministers, diplomats and generals in the parliamentary -approved Trident Commission say holding on to nuclear weapons could help deter threats to the UK's security in future.

The three-year study into the value of renewing Britain's Trident nuclear missile program in 2016 said the weapons could prove their worth in preventing national blackmail or another security threat.

'Quakers say that Trident is a relic of the Cold War and that the Trident Commission has failed to consider the legal obligations of the UK under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to negotiate in good faith for the elimination of nuclear weapons,' said a Quakers' statement after the report was released July 1."

Ecumenical News, June 5

[It's not clear to us how UK Friends can object on June 5 to a report issued on July 1. Could they possibly have taken a year to think about it? Or is there a parliamentary Friend in the know?]

From FCNL

On June 11 we received this message from FCNL:

On Tuesday, Rep. Paul Ryan's (WI) announced a new plan on how to address poverty. Rep. Ryan is the Speaker of the House, so his plans have influence. Before the plan was released, we anticipated that he would propose changes to the way poverty programs are funded – in technical terms, to “block grant” or combine funding streams for programs like SNAP (formerly food stamps) and housing assistance. Block grants are seen as a way to cut spending on human needs programs -- part of the magical thinking that if we reduce the funding for safety net, we'll reduce the number of people who need it.

The faith community, including FCNL, strongly discouraged Rep. Ryan for including

these new funding proposals in his plan. And on Tuesday we found out that our advocacy worked! We have serious concerns about other elements of the plan, especially its stringent work requirements, but it's a significant victory that the plan keeps the safety net flexible and able to respond to the number of people who need assistance.

And FCNL needs more money, too. . . .

Waging Nonviolence

Waging Nonviolence tells us of four nonviolent movements:

#in Budapest, where protestors are camping out in a central park, where there is a plan to clear hundreds of trees for construction of a disputed museum.. They have been there for 15 weeks, camped among trees which were being cut down., Activists see the construction as an affront to democracy and an example of government power-grabbing because there was no real attempt to include the public in the decision to construct new buildings in the park.

#in Oaxaca, where despite a vicious crackdown, encampments and roadblocks by teachers in the Mexican state of Oaxaca protesting neoliberal education reform continue. The teachers' movement has set up a peaceful plantón, or encampment, in the city center. They demanded a dialogue with the local and federal government about a recently approved education overhaul which they say is simply aimed at privatization.

#In Puerto Rico, where Puerto Ricans mount a historic decolonization effort amid calls to free Oscar Lopez Rivera, the "Mandela of the Americas." June 20 was declared International Day of Solidarity with Oscar Lopez Rivera by a coalition led by the National Boricua Human Rights Network and the Puerto Rican Human Rights Campaign, based in San Juan. The June 20 actions began with a virtual "pray-in" for Oscar's unconditional freedom coordinated by South African Archbishop Emeritus and Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu, in conjunction with four additional Nobel Laureates from five continents. It's happening here!

#In Britain, its vote to leave the European Union will be a disaster for the climate — both physical and political — on both sides of the Atlantic. Once Brexit goes into effect, the government will enjoy free reign to scale back the environmental regulations they were roped into by the European Union. That's a major reason why protests by groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, who were pro-Remain, will be needed. . . .

Query for July

How can I nurture the seeds of peace within myself, my community, and the world ?

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: Carol Balliet; e-mail: clerk@saquakers.org.

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

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

Donations may be made to Friends Meeting of San Antonio, P.O. Box 6127, San Antonio TX78209.

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