

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

July 2014

An Ocean of Darkness, an Ocean of Light:

Working with Hope in Washington

“I saw...that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love...flowed over the ocean of darkness.” —Journal of George Fox (1647)

Sometimes we can get discouraged: by news of violence in the world, by despair in the state of our planet or by the indifference and cynicism we hear in our own communities and the media. We may feel that we are swimming in an ocean of darkness. All of us—our neighbors, the homeless person we pass on our walk to work every day, the friend who has given up on finding a job, the children growing up impoverished in refugee camps and the militant soldier whose anger is palpable on our screens—are trying to find a way from the darkness of a troubled world to the lightness of hope and joy.

It can be hard to look into this darkness. The early Quaker leader George Fox faced this challenge. In his journal, Fox recounts how God tells him he has to see the world’s troubles clearly in order to speak to all conditions. With that insight, Fox is able to see the ocean of light and love that flows over the ocean of darkness. When we come together with compassion, understanding and openness we can find the light in dark places. Our work together brings us hope.

Quakers have long experience with facing the darkness in the world and finding the light through our social action. When the first Congress of the United States met, Quakers were there presenting a petition against slavery—and many persisted in that work over decades. When World War I was raging, Friends volunteered to drive ambulances and provided humanitarian aid across the lines of conflict. In the midst of World War II, Quakers were bold enough to create a religious lobby organization to be a voice for peace on Capitol Hill. And today, many Friends and millions of people throughout the world are dedicating themselves to the tender care of our planet.

At FCNL, we see this ocean of light flowing over the waters of darkness as we encourage and urge our government to take steps toward

Calendar

6. Sunday
Potluck lunch at
12.30 a.m..

13. Sunday
Forum – Being
Transgender, with
Ashley Smith.

20. Sunday.....
Contemplative
Singing, 9:00 –
9:45am.
11:30am, Meeting for
Business.

27. Sunday
Forum – “Action
Matters,” from
George Lakey’s
workshop at the 2014
FGC Gathering,
with Carol Balliet..

30. Wednesday
Midweek Meeting,
7.00, Gary’s home.

creating peace, ensuring a more just society and preserving the gifts of the natural world.

We see it in the conversation with a congressional staffer that leads to a relationship and a new cosponsor for legislation to end the “war on terror.” We see it when the U.S. government joins with international partners to prevent sectarian violence in the Central African Republic. We see it in the countless letters and visits to Congress from people who are engaged in change for the better. These letters and visits make a difference—if not today, then tomorrow or the next day or months or years from now. And we see it in all the ways that Friends and many others seek to meet violence with nonviolence, hate and fear of those different from us with love and welcoming of the stranger.

We wade into what may seem like the “dark waters” of Congress to find the light of actions that move toward the world we seek. There are times when it’s difficult to see progress, when it’s particularly hard to find grace present in the moment. It takes faith, vision and persistence—particularly when the work seems hardest, when Congress seems most gridlocked, when legislation that would make a difference can’t seem to get traction. In this newsletter, we want share ways that the light is shining in the dark waters of Washington right now.

On climate change, militarism, the “war on terror” and U.S. relations with Iran, we are seeing creative, effective ways forward. We find joy in this work by building relationships, seeing the glimmers of God in the people we talk with and having the courage to act when the moment is right.

These actions give hope that a different world is possible, one with peace, justice and equity, where people have the freedom to live up to their potential, where the Earth is restored. Thank you for joining us in this work.

FCNL Newsletter May 2014



We Note . . .

Two political scientists, Wagner and Onderco, in Amsterdam, have uncovered a relationship between toughness on crime and toughness in confronting other nations, such as Iran and North Korea. The US has a greater proportion of its people in prison than any other. European nations, among other democracies, are less inclined to punitive justice, and also less inclined to take a hard stance with Iran and North Korea. **FCNL has a large task ahead of it.**

Personal News

Here is an announcement, from website <http://calendar.sacurrent.com/Events/> of a stage comedy performance at the Cameo Theater in which our own Neil will be performing:

Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry On July 13 at 4:00PM

“Book by William Hauptman and Music and Lyrics by Roger Miller - Twain's timeless classic sweeps us down the mighty Mississippi as the irrepressible Huck Finn helps his friend Jim, a slave, escape to freedom at the mouth of the Ohio River. Their adventures along the way are hilarious, suspenseful and heartwarming, bringing to life your favorite characters from the novel—the Widow Douglas and her stern sister, Miss Watson; the uproarious King and Duke, who may or may not be as harmless as they seem; Huck's partner in crime, Tom Sawyer, and their rowdy gang of pals; Huck's drunken father, the sinister Pap Finn; the lovely Mary Jane Wilkes and her trusting family. Propelled by an award winning score from Roger Miller, the king of country music, this jaunty journey provides a brilliantly theatrical celebration of pure Americana.”

Place: Cameo Theatre

Get in touch with Beth if you would like to attend with others.

A message to us: "I hope this email finds you doing well. Would you mind removing my email from this contact list please? I moved to California back in February I hope to find a Friends meeting here in the near future, but loved the meetings in San Antonio!!

All the best to you and the other Friends! Renee Clair

Val Liveoak has sent us a YouTube link that shows the non-violence work that she is involved in in Central and South America. The title of the video is "Soy PAVista- Programa Alternativas a la Violencia". To watch it, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJae3BO6BCQ>. We recommend that you view it to better understand Val's work.

Sal, Michelle's brother, has become increasingly sick. Michelle is now likely to be absent from meeting, staying home to care for him every hour. She is trying to find somewhere where he can be properly cared for. It is sad to know this. While he rarely came to meeting, after moving to San Antonio, Sal made cookies every week for Michelle to bring.

Suzanne is expecting -- to be a grandma, again. And the wedding of her niece in Kentucky was lovely.

Jocelyn has finally understood why her mom cleaned the bathroom almost every weekend when she was growing up. It's because getting all the dirt build up off takes twice as long otherwise. Now, she gets it, One of the qualifications for Momhood!

We hear, via Facebook, of some of your birthdays, without being clear of whose are not included. So, rather than report some and omit some, let us just hope for birthdays for all, full of health and fulfillment in the year ahead.

And let us hope that we remember to do the same next year!

ATCF

Some ATCF (Austin Tan Circa la Frontera) volunteers, working to improve the conditions for Mexican women workers on both sides of the frontier) will be car pooling to San Antonio to have fun and to support friends at Fuerza Unida on the following dates:

July 20, Sunday, 2PM - Loteria Mexicana

August 2, Saturday - Venta de Platos BBQ fundraiser for youth - \$7, vegan option available.

Fuerza Unida was created by Mexican-American women who were laid off by Levi's when the company moved the work to South America. It has proved a vigorous organization on our South Side. Judith says:

"Please consider joining us and get in touch. Best wishes, Judith and Jamie"

June Business Meeting

We regret that we have no full report of the June Meeting for Business. We hope to correct this in August. We have partial information:

Meeting for Business commenced with a quotation from Wilmer Cooper, A Living Faith: An Historical and Comparative Study of Quaker Beliefs, pub. 1990, pp. 199-200. :

"The best known social testimony is the Peace Testimony. For Friends this is not just the absence of war and violence; it is a way of life that tries to embody the way of peace and justice in personal relationships and in the structure of society. Thus, the Peace Testimony is not just inward peace of mind and spirit, but must find expression in dealing with conflict in the outward affairs of the family, community, nation, and world."

The Clerk's Announcements included one on Hospitality for the FGC Executive Committee on Jan 30-31, 2015. A Property Committee report stated that the air conditioner has been attended

to, though there is more costly service to be done in June. Power washing and painting costs are being considered. The light in the parking lot has been fixed and Friends are asked “not to mess with it.” [We wouldn’t know how.] Means of controlling flooding are under consideration. And Friends are asked to note on a roster to be placed in the commonroom if they have a key to the property.

There were reports from the Outreach Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Religious Education Committee, and the Treasurer..

Meeting closed in silence.

Miscellany

In Chapter Ten, Mind, Spirit and Creative Fields, in subsection “Opening to Spirit, Opening to Silence” of *The Heart-Mind Matrix, How the heart can teach the mind new ways to think*, by Joseph Chilton Pearce, it reads:

“George Fox, whose life brought about the Quaker Movement, opened to Spirit without a personal agenda—the only way in which Spirit can be opened to, or even approached. This openness indicates a “soft will” surrendered to the heart. In Fox’s case, through his “soft will,” he opened to the heart while embracing a “hard will” able to follow the heart regardless of where that heart and its soft will led.” A rare combination—George Foxes have not been overly plentiful in our history.”

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In the Poley's book, *Friendly Anecdotes*, they quote George Bernard Shaw, “by laughter, only, can we destroy evil without malice and affirm good fellowship without mawkishness.” So, Friends, eschew mawkishness by laughing at, or with, each other!

The Poleys provide many examples. Here is one:

A Friend, Anna, “at a wedding, rose during the silence in the meeting, and said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?' and sat down. The feelings of the bride and groom are not described." Nor is Anna’s inspiration. She herself had originally been proposed to by her husband, then a shy Friend who, succeeding in getting her alone, but over a pigpen, and said, “Anna, shall we keep a pig?”

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We are accustomed to getting pleas for our signature to petitions. But this one was different. It was from Basil Farraj, a graduate of Earlham, the Friends college in Indiana, with a degree in Peace and Global Studies. He says “My dad, Abdul-Razeq Farraj, is the Administrative Director of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, a grassroots group that helps Palestinian men and women small farmers survive under the Occupation.” His father has been in administrative detention, without trial, by the Israeli occupation authorities, for eight years and had been on hunger strike for 37 days. It was not possible to refuse.

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When I settle into meeting, I close my eyes and place myself in empty black space, as if I were 100,000 meters above the earth. I imagine myself enveloped in dark, empty, silence.

But on a recent Sunday something happened. Suddenly, I was in the dark, but above a little airfield in Yorkton Saskatchewan, climbing to 1,000 feet in the dark night. It is my first (and only) nighttime solo. I just have to take off, fly around the airfield and land again. The sky is dark; darkness surrounds me.

Except for a detail; below me, on the prairie, there are points of light, around the airfield and, a few miles away in the town of Yorkton rows of street lights, and isolated farm lights spread miles around. And I can see a few lights at the same height as myself -- other nighttime pupil-pilots’ tail and wingtip lights.

It is a strong and treasured memory. I can't abolish it. I level out at 1,000 feet, bank and turn left on the first turn of four around the airfield. There is no horizon in the darkness; I have to rely on instruments. I am up in the night air, alone, flying this little airplane, a Fairchild Cornell. Circling the airfield, I turn for the final time, and start dropping towards the runway, lit by parallel lines of lights to each side.

But in the darkness lights can be disorienting when the ground is not to be seen. I glide down, trying to estimate how high I am. Hesitantly, I decide I'm there and I cut the motor, leveling out. After a tense while, I feel a soft rumble from the wheels. I have landed smoothly!

It is a meeting selfie. But lovely. I return to the Meeting darkness. Ken

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We see altogether too many photographs and news items of grim-faced men in uniforms, with helmets, and carrying firearms. We see them in Egypt quelling demonstrations, in Xinjiang, facing down Uighur separatists, in Syria fighting rebels, or the rebels themselves, in Iraq, Libya, Chechnya, Waziristan, Kashmir, Bangkok, Palestine, Lebanon, Baghdad, eastern Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Brazil, and where next? The world needs more peacemakers.

And Peace Direct is launching its "second Tomorrow's Peacebuilders' competition to find and fund the best emerging locally led peacebuilding organisations across the world. Entrants will need to show how they are making communities more peaceful, or breaking the cycle of violence." Kapamagogopa, in the Philippines, won the competition in 2013. Peace Direct, in London, has a website, www.insightonconflict.org. It offers support to help local peacemaking organizations around the world grow their impact and strengthen their organization.

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Our meetinghouse is brand, sparkling, new. Jordans Quaker Meeting in England is about as old as they come. In 1671 a "yeoman farmer" sold part of his farm at Jordans to Friends, where they placed a meetinghouse and burying ground --William Penn is buried there. His grave was unmarked but later marked by a man's memory of where it was.

So, as it is frequently visited, there is a small guide to it. This says, "Memories are many here at Jordans, memories of William Penn, Thomas Ellwood, George Fox, John Archdale, Joseph Rule, and Isaac Pennington; memories of men like the 'hard and obstinat' Timothy Child and of the blacksmiths, shoemakers, farmers, tailors and butchers who were among the pioneers of Quakerism in Buckinghamshire. The memories are like signposts that tell us where we were and are in the search for God and truth in our lives as members of the Religious Society of Friends."

What memories will Friends have of our meetinghouse two centuries and more from now? What will be said of our search for God and truth in our lives?

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50 years ago the Beatles came to America, to screaming crowds. And then changed American men's hairstyles, even Kenneth Boulding's. Everyone's hair grew longer.

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Giving birth to a child with dwarfism or Down's syndrome can be devastating, sometimes breaking up a marriage, isolating the parents and the child. And what of parenting a child who becomes a terrorist or a murderer? One such mother actually discovered unity with humanity. Sue Klebold is the mother of one of the Columbine schoolboy killers. She says, "When I hear about terrorism in the news, I think, 'That's somebody's kid.' Columbine made me feel more connected to mankind than anything else possibly could have." What a loving response to her grief.

Andrew Solomon tells of this in his book, *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*.

## History Renewed

Uganda has a recent law outlawing homosexual people and activities. Friends' history comes alive in this new information from Dave Zarembka:

"To respond to the attacks on homosexual Ugandans, Olympia Friends Meeting in Washington State, has initiated a project called 'Friends New Underground Railroad'. (See [friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org](http://friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org) for more information). My quotes come from their webpage. They have three 'conductors' who assist homosexuals to flee from Uganda – one conductor has already been severely beaten. In [one] incident. . . , 'of 16 [expelled from Uganda Martyr's University,] three escaped without our assistance, we assisted 12 of them to escape. One disappeared – it is believed she was picked up by the police. The 12 are currently receiving assistance in preparing visa applications.'

Here is another case in which they assisted: 'On April 20th, Easter Sunday, the Bishop of Jinja Diocese – the Rt. Reverend Fr. Charles Wamika – preached a sermon in the Jinja Cathedral. Applauding the new law, he directed Catholic hospitals not to serve LGBT clients, and called for the expulsion of all known and suspected LGBT students from all Catholic schools, colleges and universities. On that very day, the Dean of Students of Uganda Martyr's Seminary submitted a final report to the Seminary Disciplinary Council on the 22 seminarians 'involved in unnatural sexual activities'. Four days later, the 22 seminarians were kicked out, with the Bishop calling on the parents of the seminarians to denounce them. He also forwarded a copy of the final report to the chief of police, who replied that he was launching an 'investigation'. The seminarians went into hiding, and, after some delay, all 22 were assisted by Friends New Underground Railroad conductors and are now in Nairobi."

Who, we wonder, are the "conductors?" Presumably African Friends from nearby Churches and Meetings.

There is another New Underground Railroad, sponsored by North Carolina Yearly Meeting, an FUM, programmed, Meeting: <http://www.ncym-fum.org/#!/quakernew-underground-railroad/c2ph>, and at [www.quakernur.org](http://www.quakernur.org), created as an initiative to motivate Friends to become more aware and active in the fight against Human Trafficking. We have little contact with programmed Friends, but they show us how to keep Friends' historic testimonies alive.

## Nilo, VoI

"... it changed a village of 1,794 people, just through photographs. I want other girls to be able to be more than a seamstress, to be a changemaker, uniting their communities to live peacefully." Nilo, VoI participant.

This is a quotation of a participant in a Peace Direct "Voice of image" program in Sri Lanka, in which young people are trained to use cameras and then encouraged to take photos of the beauty and diversity of their country. The photos are then displayed, bringing people of hostile groups together to view them, bringing them together spiritually. One of the young people describes it as "Spreading /Sharing LOVE and COMPASSION through PHOTOGRAPHY. " And it appears to be effective.

## School

We have read in May of the racially integrated high achievers' high school in Chicago attended by Michelle Obama. It was opened in 1975 under pressure on the authorities, when she was 11, born in 1965. So it was just ready for her, and it changed her life.

In about 1964 Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting was approached by parents in Detroit, led

by judge Wade McCree, a “man of color,” asking it to open a Friends school in Detroit. His daughter had been refused admission to a private school there and he trusted Friends. Quarterly, of course, had no money for such an endeavor, but took it under advisement. We remember one Friend there saying that he had been educated in a Friends school in New York, a white island in a black sea and that the country needed no more schools like that. He became clerk of a committee to consider the matter.

The city made land available and, with a fund-raising miracle, the Friends School was opened with its first class, Grade 1, in a mobile classroom, and with the determination to be fully integrated from top to bottom. Before opening, scholarships had to be available for poor children in the area surrounding the school. At a time when private schools were leaving Detroit, the Friends School moved in.

Then the problem arose – how would poor parents know of the scholarships and would they apply for them? Friends went to social workers to identify possible families, and then to the families, mostly black, to help the parents apply. Integration was achieved. If Michelle Obama had been in Detroit, the school’s high school class would have been ready for her. You can find out a little more by going to <http://www.friendsschool.org/our-history>. Or you can speak to Carol R, whose uncle was the first headmaster. She says,

“My uncle, Hali Giessler is still alive. Friends School in Detroit opened in the fall of 1965 with 1st - 5th grades. We began in an old A&P grocery store with huge green curtains between the 5 classrooms. For many years, my mother interviewed every family and made sure that the classes had a variety of races and religions. I learned recently that we were not welcomed by many and had trouble finding our temporary location until the portables were available. We did move into portables later that school year at the property at 1100 St Aubin Blvd. Each year, an additional grade was added. The summer before the school opened, my mom, me, and Hali, Dot, Donna and Helen Giessler lived with the Conner Mills family in Farmington. My cousins and I were in the first classes of the school.”

The school places this statement in its website:

"Friends believe that each person has the capacity for goodness and a responsibility to attain that goodness. Our schools create deliberate moral communities-communities that value the process of reflection and inquiry, and are rooted in the fundamental Quaker belief in truth as a process of continuing revelation. Quaker pedagogy is based on the principles of teachers as caring facilitators of the learning process, dialogue as the foundation of learning in the classroom, and curricula reflecting Friends testimonies and values. Friends schools support the development of persons who are creative thinkers, peacemakers, and confident humanitarians, contributing to responsive and responsible public leadership in the world. The Friends council on Education supports the development of teachers and leaders who can make this possible." –Irene McHenry

A *Detroit Free Press*'s lead editorial in 1987, was entitled: “Best Friends: This jewel of a school would be a shame to lose.”

## Other Friends

We have already seen that there are different kinds of Friends. Dave Zarembka sends us an account of a graduate of Friends Theological College, a concept a bit strange to us, in Kenya, one of many stories of people who are “equipped and energized by the ministry of Friends United Meeting to equip others to know Jesus Christ.” He then went as a missionary to Congo, where he insisted on sharing the hard work and the same food as the others there (“What you eat, I’ll eat. Whatever you do, we’ll do together.”). In Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, there is more of an elitist culture. Leaders sit and watch. Men do not work in the fields. Pastor Henry joined in and between them they built a church, complete with roof. What he did in the Congo was culturally inappropriate, working with

his hands, making bricks, like women, but it didn't hinder him a bit. An example for us, though not making bricks – clearing and washing dishes, wiping tables, perhaps?

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David, out west, sends us this experience:

Tiniest yellow flowers
That hug the desert floor
It's your fault
I fell to my knees.
June 5, David B.

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war.
We seek a society with equity and justice for all.
We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled.
We seek an earth restored.

FCNL's motto

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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