

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

April 2014

Hopes in Meeting for Worship

In a forum, Gretchen asked us for unpremeditated “Free Writing,” Here is what four participants wrote for. “What we hope to gather from silent worship.”

“Gathering into silence, I hope to get my cluttered mind out of the way of others. I focus and focus and come back again and refocus trying to get centered, trying to get beneath a surface that like water keeps popping me back up to the top where I start over again.

I watch my breath:

Breathing in I watch my breath
Breathing out I watch my breath
Breathing in deeply, I watch my breath
Breathing out slowly, I watch my breath
Smiling, I breath in
Releasing, I breath out

Repeat and repeat, up-down, up-down until finally I am buoyed in the silence. Others may or may not be there but at least I am out of their way. I wait there and wait until I no longer feel the strong current attempting to lift me. My breath is enough, and patient waiting is the life lived within the Great Love. Only later will I realize that others have joined me and at times the whole meeting has joined each other.”

And another wrote,

“In Meeting for Worship, I hope for the chance to lay down my burden. To lighten my load. I hope for enlightenment. Now here’s a metaphor! Enlightenment as a physical not [or not only] a mental process. Is that what “letting go” means? Does insight come out of pain? Can I shift the burden if I don’t gain insight first?”

And another:

“What is a deep experience like? When I come to meeting for worship I hope to have a sense of peace and joy that comes from a quiet mind and strive for the spirit to speak to the God within. And if I’m “lucky” an intuition or message comes that I feel like sharing with others.. I rise and speak. If I hesitate – wait, someone else in Meeting often rises and speaks to the same idea. It feels good, confirming that the message came from the spirit.

Often, when my mind is quiet, nothing comes through as a message. I find that the silent worship process was doing its thing, whatever that is. But, silent or without message, it feels right!

Calendar

6. Sunday
Potluck lunch at 11.30.
13. Sunday
Meeting for Business.
20, Sunday
South Central Yearly Meeting.
27, Sunday
Forum – A Comparison of the Words of Lao Tzu and Jesus – Doug and Gary.
30. Wednesday
Midweek Meeting, at Gary’s home, 7pm.

celebration of the 100th anniversary UT Butler School of Music. They will perform in Honolulu, Okazaki City (Japan), Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, Macau, Shenzhen (China), Beijing, and London. When she returns she will once again be on the faculty of Friends Music Camp as a woodwind instructor. She then plans to return to Austin as a freelance musician and continue with the clarinet studio she established last year for middle school and high school students.

Bo Tep on Interfaith Mysticism

We sent Bo Tep, who spoke to us in March of Buddhist teachings and meditation, the notice of the talk this month by Dr. Ori Soltes. He replied:

“Thank you for this note on “Mysticism and the Passion for Dialogue.” This forum sounds full of wonders...I am somewhat familiar with Rumi, and by chance when we visited Tobin library at Oakwell not too far from the Friends house, I picked up a book on sale by Gulen, it was from an inter-faith library.

In the last 30+ years, I have been drawn to step into this stream of inter-religious dialogue with Benedictine nuns, devout and secular Franciscans, Hindu practitioners, devout Jews, Ignatians, Zen-Catholics, followers of many different Buddhist denominations, and Friends. .

When I step into this dialogue sphere (theistic - non-theistic...), and settle into the peaceful silence of deep listening, deep hearing...the teachings of the other traditions speak loudly of their wisdom and spirituality...I discovered similar teachings in Buddhism as well as differences...which allow me to consider new boundaries and horizons of understanding.

I hope to have more opportunities to experience this process with the Friends at San Antonio. Bo Tep”

Dr. Soltes talk is described as follows:

“Mysticism is an intensified form of everyday religious thinking. In order to be a mystic, one must be intensely committed to and engaged in one’s faith. One might suppose, therefore, that a mystic would be particularly disinterested in interfaith and multicultural dialogue. And yet, the opposite has often been true across the history of Abrahamic mystical traditions. This talk will discuss this, with particular emphasis on four medieval mystics--St Francis of Assisi, Ibn Arabi, Mevlana Rumi, and Abraham Abulafia--before turning to consider how such thinking has inspired the contemporary Turkish theologian and social philosopher, Fethullah Gulen, and how his passion for interfaith, multicultural dialogue is rooted in mysticism and expresses itself in an ever-expanding call to altruistic service of others.”

Business Meeting

Meeting for Business commenced with an advice:

“[The Quaker] method of transacting business presumes that in a given matter there is a way that is in harmony with God’s plan, that our search is for that right way, and not simply for a way which is either victory for some faction, or an expedient compromise. What we call “the Sense of the Meeting” is not the collected wisdom of those present, but the collective discernment of God’s will....Once the Meeting has discerned God’s will as best it can at that moment in time, the decision of the Meeting is vested with a measure of Divine authority. Decisions are not “revisited” by staff, clerks, or committees. Those who were not present accept the decision of the Meeting. This is not to say that the Meeting’s decisions have ultimate authority, since our discernment is never free of human imperfection. The Meeting itself can always revisit decisions, and new light may be found.”

---Eden Grace, Global Ministries

Director, Friends United Meeting (FUM)

The Nominating Committee report contained two definitions of terms:
Resource – a friend who can give advice and support, but for some reason, is not on the committee.
Clerk “in waiting” – will serve as a member of the committee for a few months before moving into the role as a clerk

A friend expressed appreciation for completion of the 2014 roster.

The M&O report was read by a committee member. Doug Balfour has been a very helpful and beneficial “Resource” for the committee. A friend asked if the list of items from the January potluck, to help strengthen the meeting, were being addressed. M&O and Outreach have both used these lists.

The Firstday School Subcommittee report stated that there was discussion on how individuals should obtain background checks. The subcommittee members will put together wording for this policy. There was a discussion on how instructors should be educated about the Quaker faith. The Meeting Clerk thanked the subcommittee..

The P&SC has discussed FMSA representation at a public forum; this needs approval. If a member is carrying a sign, the sign wording needs approval. Groups to be supported should be non-violent. The committee will provide more information.

Building and Grounds committees are combined into the Property Committee. The new clerk of this committee thanked James for all the work he has done and will continue to do.

The Treasurer’s report was read by the new treasurer. A friend expressed appreciation for all the work that was done by him to get the information loaded into a new software system.

Meeting closed in silence.

Delegation to the Texas Valley, May 16-18, 2014

Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera's May delegation, co-sponsored by Women on the Border, will follow "the path of an immigrant." Here's a tentative itinerary:

Tour a South Texas immigrant detention facility; converse with the director, interview detainees.
Visit immigrant colonias near the Rio Grande where residents organize themselves for their rights and their survival.

Walk a short section of The Wall, speak with a Sierra Club representative about environmental and social impacts.

Meet with legal group in San Antonio that serves immigrants free or at a low cost.

Discussion with Atanacio Martinez, long-time human and labor rights organizer in Reynosa with our Mexican partner group, the Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s. He'll cross the border into Texas near McAllen to meet with our group.

Visit Fuerza Unida in San Antonio, ‘the first casualty of Globalization,’ a women’s sewing collective and community enterprise and education center, established in 1990 by former Levy Strauss workers.

You will need to complete registration for this trip by April 10, 2014 in order to comply with ICE regulations for entering a detention facility: Driver’s License or Passport required. Please let us know before April 1 (!!) if you are interested. Fees will be determined on a sliding scale: \$250 to \$325. Some partial scholarships available.

Contact Judith (chelarose@grandecom.net) for more information or to express interest. You can also visit www.womenontheborder.org or our website for more details.

Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera

<http://www.atcf.org/>

Friends Sharing Friends

Are you longing for more quiet opportunities to worship & share with other Friends?
Would you enjoy taking part in a radically unprogrammed retreat with Friends
from a variety of theological backgrounds for a week or just a few days?

Have you heard of Quaker Spring?

Quaker Spring is: "Experiencing the Inward Christ Together, June 24-29, 2014, (between
Conservative Friends Gathering in Barnesville & FGC gathering in California PA) at Stillwater
Meetinghouse & Olney Friends School in Barnesville, Ohio

Our program will be shaped by God's leading as the week unfolds.

Each day will include:

BIBLE STUDY

WORSHIP

QUIET TIME

EVENING EXPLORATIONS

FELLOWSHIP

"The intent of all speaking [in meeting for worship] is to bring into the Life, and to walk in, and to possess the same, and to live in and enjoy [that Life], and to feel God's presence, and that is in the silence, (not the wandering whirling tempestuous part of man or woman)...There is the flock lying down at noon-day, and the feeding of the bread of life, and drinking of the springs of life, when they do not speak words. For words declared are to bring people to [the Life] and [are for] confessing God's goodness and love, as they are moved by the eternal God and his spirit..."

Adapted from The Works of George Fox, volume IV p.174 (Philadelphia: Marcus T.C.Gould,
1831

Welcoming to Friends of all Branches

Fees by freewill offering (guideline of roughly \$30-50/adult/day for dorm room & meals)

Deadline for children's program: June 1st

More information & registration forms at www.quakerspring.org. Or contact the planning group at
quakerspring@gmail.com

(or c/o Deborah Haines, 2794 Fort Scott Drive, Arlington VA 22202 703-706-8176.)"

Miscellany

The Light Within, Then And Now, by Rex Ambler, is a recent Pendle Hill Pamphlet
Here is the brief description: given by Quakerbooks:

"When contemporary Friends speak to each other of the Light Within, do we have a shared understanding of what we mean? Is it the same Light that George Fox spoke of? Rex Ambler explores how early Friends thought about and engaged with the Light in ways that have mostly been lost to Friends today. How could we be enriched - as individuals and as a community - by recovering some of the early Quaker experiences of Light? Discussion questions are included."

We have now heard Bo Tep about Buddhist meditation. Here is a quotation from the 17th
Karmapa, head of the 900 year old Karma Kagyu Lineage, on Guidance:

"Each person must find his or her own path. Nonetheless, seek guidance from wise and compassionate people and listen to them earnestly. This will help you find the best way to proceed - now and in the future."

He is the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa. We understand that the Dalai Lama will not be reincarnated upon his death due to complications with the Chinese government.

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The School of the Americas has been a US training center for "enforcers" of Latin America governments and criticized for being associated with illegal and violent enforcing.

The SOA Watch movement strives to close this school down. It will hold Spring Days of

Action in DC (March 30 - April 3) and has an online newspaper, *Presente*, to be found at:<http://www.soaw.org/presente/images/pdf/Spring2014.pdf>.

The Spring issue contains mobilizing information for the Days of Action, and also focuses on recent developments in Latin America and within the movement.

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Friends do not make business decisions by majority votes, nor even by rational thought, but by striving to discern the way required by the inward spirit. When unity is not found Meetings must strive anew. But individual Friends also take part in American democratic processes, which do use a majority vote for decisions. The way by which these two are linked will be by striving to discern which way a Friend should vote.

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A year ago an article in *The Economist*, just reread, made this comment in discussing a dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church just before WWI: "Mysticism – any movement in which people believe they are having a direct experience of the divine – undermines the authority of religious leaders." Old George certainly provides us with an example of this. And, with Elizabeth and others, he provided us with a religious organization in which leaders have no authority, which, depending on that direct experience, can arise from any Friend.

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We have seen the grief of Chinese families at the loss of their loved ones, louder and unlike American expressions of grief. Janet and Ken remember Chinese funerals 60 years ago. Mourners, loud in their grief, were covered by a canvas "roof" carried on poles by paid help, to conceal them from demons. And, to conceal the very fact that it was a funeral, a small brass band followed playing music such as "Happy Days Are Here Again," with stilt-walkers. Grief was much more complicated in southern Chinese culture.

Let us hope never soon to become a loved one. They're usually dead.

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FCNL is working with congressional offices and a broad coalition of more than a hundred organizations from twenty-three countries to shine a light on the Syrian crisis that continues to rage as we approach the third anniversary of the Syrian civil war.

More than 9.3 million Syrians remain in desperate need of humanitarian assistance as a result of this generation's most devastating humanitarian crisis. FCNL sought letters to congress to support the UN Security Council Syria Humanitarian Resolution of 2014.

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In Singapore, Friends had a friend, an English doctor. During WWII she had been a nurse with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China. After the war she completed her medical training and returned. When the Communists took over China, she said, she observed that they easily dealt with Friends but were rebuffed by the Catholic Church.

She left China for Hong Kong, where she became a friend of Han Su Yin, the author of *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, and joined the Catholic Church. She then moved to Singapore. She took a sabbatical in Albuquerque, and, to the Friends' disappointment, never returned. She had found in Albuquerque a large population of poor Catholics among whom she could work and worship. No longer an associate of Friends because of Friends' lack of protection from infiltration by Chinese Communists.

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"If we were supposed to talk more than listen we would have been given two mouths and one ear." – Mark Twain

## **FCNL on Incarceration**

Dear Friends,

We're writing with some exciting news! On January 30, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee voted 13-5 to pass an amended version the Smarter Sentencing Act, S. 1410. In a show of bipartisanship, the bill, sponsored by Sens. Durbin (IL) and Lee (UT), would make long overdue changes to harmful federal sentencing practices.

Mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses are one of the primary contributors to the problem of mass incarceration. The amended Smarter Sentencing Act addresses overcrowding in federal prisons by halving the length of mandatory sentences for many drug offenses and by making the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 retroactive, allowing 8,800 federal prisoners to return to court to seek fairer sentences.

While this bill is a step in the right direction, we are extremely concerned about the last-minute changes.

Sen. Chuck Grassley (IA) proposed amendments that create new mandatory minimums for sexual abuse, domestic violence and terrorism offenses. Introducing new mandatory minimums will not improve our criminal justice system, no matter the offense. However, this bill will help thousands of people currently serving unjust sentences and reduce the U.S. rate of incarceration going forward.

The Senate Judiciary Committee took a step toward ending harsh, discriminatory sentencing. Now that the bill has passed in committee, Will you send a message to your Senator and ask them to urge leadership to bring the bill to a vote on the Senate floor? It's important that your senator hears support for sentencing reform in order for the bill to move to the Senate floor.

### Solitary Confinement

On February 25, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Durbin (Ill.), held its second hearing on solitary confinement, titled "Reassessing Solitary Confinement II: The Human Rights, Fiscal and Public Safety Consequences." Six witnesses testified before the subcommittee, including Charles Samuels, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Damon Thibodeaux, who was held in solitary confinement on Death Row 23 hours a day for 15 years before being exonerated by DNA evidence.

FCNL submitted a statement on the history and current use of solitary confinement for the Congressional record. In total, 130 statements were submitted to the subcommittee.

Read FCNL's testimony.

### More on Sentencing Reform to Come

On Thursday March 6, the Senate Judiciary Committee also passed the Recidivism Reduction and Public Safety Act, S. 1675, a bipartisan bill introduced by Senators Whitehouse (RI) and Portman (OH). Please watch for analysis on FCNL's stance on this bill at our Mass Incarceration page.

Remember to contact your senators about the Smarter Sentencing Act!

Thank you, Tila Neguse

Legislative Associate, Domestic Policy

<http://fcnl.org/images/about/who/staff/Tila-Neguse-blog.jpg>

### **In the Life and Power of God:**

On the Spiritual Journey with Early Friends. A short course at Pendle Hill with Marcelle Martin, May 11-15, 2014

At the beginning of Quakerism, great power moved through the faithful lives and witness of ordinary people who responded to God's transforming call. Examine ten elements of the spiritual

journey experienced by early Friends and reflect on our own experiences today:

Longing ♦ Seeking ♦ Turning Within ♦ Openings ♦ The Refiner's Fire ♦ Being Gathered into Community ♦ Leadings of the Spirit ♦ Living in the Cross ♦ Living in Divine Love and Power ♦ Perfection (in one's measure)

Are we, too, called to give ourselves and our lives whole-heartedly for God's purposes? What can early Friends teach us about how to do this? How can we help one another follow the call with faith and boldness?

Marcelle Martin has served as Quaker studies teacher and a spiritual nurturer at Pendle Hill. A graduate of the Shalem Institute program on Spiritual Guidance and the School of the Spirit's program on Contemplative Living and Prayer, Marcelle works with meetings to deepen their spiritual practices. The author of two Pendle Hill pamphlets, she is a member of Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting.

Recent Posts on the Pendle Hill website include:

The Big Question

A Whole Year of A Whole Heart

The New Birth

Complete, United With God's Love

Perfection (in One's Measure)

## Quaker Youtube

There is now a Quaker Outreach Youtube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/Quakerspeak/> or <http://www.QuakerSpeak.com>. There are frequent vidoes about Friends. Recent ones include *Quaker Silence*, *How Quakerism Began*, *The Faithfulness Lecture*, *Student Activism as Prophetic Ministry*, *Dance Party Erupts During Quaker Meeting for Worship*, and *Ben Guaraldi: Making "What Does George Fox Say"*, a parody of Ylvis' mega-viral "What does the Fox Say" YouTube video. .

It is sponsored by *Friends Journal* and Friends General Conference.

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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