

November 2018



The Friendly News

San Antonio Quakers

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November Calendar

SUNDAY Nov 4	10 am—Meeting for Worship 11:15—Potluck Lunch & Birthdays
MONDAY Nov 5	4:30-5:30 pm—Yoga with Peggy
THURSDAY Nov 8	6 pm—Soup and Conversation 7 pm—Mid-Week Meeting for Worship
SUNDAY Nov 11	10 am—Meeting for Worship 11:30 FORUM: “Migration”, speaker TBA
SUNDAY Nov 18	10 am—Meeting for Worship 11:30—Meeting for Business
MONDAY Nov 19	4:30-5:30 pm—Yoga with Greg
SUNDAY Nov 25	10 am—Meeting for Worship 11:30 FORUM: “Gratitude”, with Peggy
WEDNESDAY Nov 28	7-8 pm—Mid-Week Worship at the Whiting/Rule home

November Query:



In the face of today's political, social, and cultural conflicts, how does our faith guide and sustain both our integrity and our prophetic witness?

Recent Events:

Community Garage Sale

We hosted a well-attended Community Garage Sale on Saturday, October 27th. Families from Meeting and from the surrounding community sold their old stuff. Booth proceeds were donated to the Migrant Center for Human Rights. Leftover items were donated to the Roy Maas Youth Alternatives Thrift Store.



Renewal of Marriage Vows

Joni and James Mize renewed their wedding vows on the 10th anniversary of their marriage at the October 28th Meeting for Worship. They sat facing each other on the marriage chairs. They rose, and Joni spoke of how her love had grown as the years passed. She called on the witness of gathered Friends to her pledge of abiding love. James then spoke of his love growing and expanding his heart and abiding love. They kissed and sat down to hear a message of heartfelt joy in their declarations.

Forum 10/14: San Antonio's Upcoming City Election and Propositions A, B, C

Summary prepared by Jim Spickard

The Meeting hosted former City Councilor Reed Williams and Ashley Smith, a former Meeting attendee who is active in local LGBTQ+ politics, to discuss Propositions A, B, and C on the upcoming city ballot and to talk about the city's general direction under the current Mayor, Council, and city staff. Proposition A would expand the number of Council actions that citizens could overturn, while simultaneously lowering the number of signatures needed to call a vote and expanding the time available to gather them. Proposition B would lower the city manager's salary to be 10 times the salary of the city's lowest paid employee and limit the manager's term to 8 years. Proposition C would allow the Firefighter's Union to declare a contract impasse unilaterally and take the city to binding arbitration.

Both speakers opposed all three measures. Reed pointed out that Proposition A seems to favor democracy, but it would mean that nearly every action of the City Council could be put to a referendum. This would increase the number of special elections and undercut the will of the voters who put the Councilors in place to represent them. It would almost certainly lower the city's bond rating, thus raising the interest rates at which the city borrows money for needed improvements. Ashley pointed out that Proposition A also threatens ordinances that protect LGBTQ+ and others from discrimination. *(Subsequent news that right-wing organizers are targeting this ordinance shows this threat to be real – ed.)*

Reed said that Proposition B would not apply to the current city manager, but it would make it very difficult to hire a quality city manager in the future. The manager handles a \$2.8 billion city budget (\$1.25 billion general fund) and a 12,000 person workforce. Few experienced applicants would do this job for \$300,000 – half of the current manager's salary. Both speakers said that Proposition C was the least democratic. It would put the firefighters' contract—and thus a large part of the city budget—in the hands of an arbitrator who is not responsible to San Antonio citizens.

The speakers answered questions from the audience, including several that explored some of the reasons that progressive voters might want to support the propositions. One Friend pointed to a series of Council decisions over the past 20 years that clearly overrode the will of the people—including a few that he said were based on deliberately misleading data. Though he, himself, did not favor the propositions, he said he understood the anger that generated them.

The conversation ended with a discussion of the new direction the Council seems to be setting for the city. Both of the speakers spoke of the promise of improved equity that this direction brings.

(Ed note: Ashley has just published an article in the Rivard Report summarizing her views: <https://the-rivardreport.com/charter-amendments-would-diminish-power-of-already-marginalized-groups/>)

Forum 10/28: How do Friends view the Bible?

Forum and summary prepared by Gretchen Haynes

In the group gathered, there was one birthright Friend. All the others grew up in other traditions with Bible stories and sermons. Today, we will discuss how Quakers view the Bible. First, it is important to remember that these writings were not intended to be viewed as sacred when they were written, i.e. Paul's letters and the four Gospels. Only in 376 were the writings of the New Testament collected by church fathers to become a sacred text.

Early Friends read scriptures in English – no priest to interpret. Robert Barclay wrote in the 1650's that the scriptures were written under the guidance of Spirit. Today, branches of Friends follow different paths. Friends General Conference meetings generally follow scholars such as John Dominic Crossin, Marcus Borg, and the members of the Jesus Seminar in seeking the context of the writing & the audience. They approach the Bible as the human response in history to their experience of God. Friends United Meeting and EFC follow a literal reading as the infallible Word of God.



Here, I look at the context of the New Testament: Palestine was under brutal Roman domination with collaboration by Jewish high priests and elite. However, only about 20% of Jews lived in Palestine. The rest were in diaspora around the Mediterranean. The 4 Gospels were written from the oral tradition about Jesus 40 to 70 years after his death, to groups of followers. The first three were in competition with post Temple- destruction Jewish sects. The message they portray of Jesus was: what it was like and how to live in the Kingdom of God right now – not under the rule of Cesar.

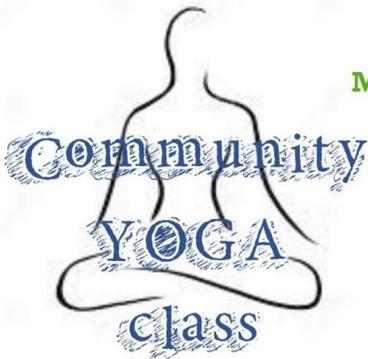
As we read, we see a blend of memory and metaphor in all four gospels, not a historically accurate biography. The details and emphasis in each Gospel vary according to the audience. We have seen in the birth stories how the different audiences influenced the details.

In light of today's Meeting renewal of marriage vows, let's look at the Wedding at Cana, John 2:1-11. First, it is only found in John and it is the first miracle – given at the beginning of Jesus' ministry – and first in the book. Therefore, it must have been important to the writer of John. The message: Marriage is a covenant, in symbolism here between God and the Jews. But the wine is used up; Jesus provides new wine. Symbolically, for the writer of John, the Judaism of his day was empty, so he brings a new way of living – in relation to God. The significance is to tell readers: this is a sign about Jesus' powers coming from God.

Our reading puts the message of John in perspective – his audience was primarily Hellenize gentiles probably in Ephesus, Turkey. This story comes in chapter 2, after the well-known prologue: "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word [Logos] was with God, and the Word [Logos] was God. He was with God in the beginning...." The writer of John seeks to set the theological framework for the followers in his group.

Friends today read the Bible in the Spirit, seeking the message under the words, the parable and the miracles. The forum group gave examples - "turn the other cheek." This is found in Matthew 5: 38-41 as part of the Sermon on the Mount. Val explained that a man would strike another with the back of his hand, but if the subordinate turned the other cheek, the second blow would be with the open hand, thus conveying equality to the subordinate. Similarly, "walk the second mile" referred to the rule that a Roman soldier could force a Jew to carry his pack one mile, but not farther or the soldier would be disciplined. And "an eye for an eye" refers to the Jewish rule of increasing retribution; Jesus was saying: take no more than was taken from you. These lessons show how subversive Jesus' teaching were.

Upcoming Events:



1st & 3rd Mondays of the Month

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4:30 - 5:30pm
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September 3rd & 17th
October 1st & 15th
November 5th & 19th
December 3rd & 17th
January 7th & 21st
February 4th & 18th



6pm - 7pm
Soup

&



7pm - 8pm
Silent Worship

2nd Thursday of the Month

October 11th
November 8th
December 13th
January 10th
February 14th

Future Forums – Nov 11 & 24, 11:30am

Nov 11: The migrant crisis has gotten more pressing, particularly in the run-up to the midterm elections. As of this week, ICE is now releasing large numbers of migrant families from the Karnes and Dilley detention centers with no assistance to help them rejoin their relatives and sponsors. We will have someone to inform us of what is happening and how we can help.

Nov 25: Peggy will lead us in a conversation about gratitude. Come share your insights and views.

Book/Media Exchange – Dec 2, 11:30-12:30 (at monthly potluck)

Bring your unwanted books, CDs, DVDs, magazines and take what you fancy. Or take something even if you don't bring anything to put on the table. It's all good. And just in time for the holidays

Silent retreat Lebh Shomea, December 6-9, 2018.

Lebh Shomea, means "Listening Heart. We will again have a silent retreat at Lebh Shomea House of Prayer in Sarita, Texas.

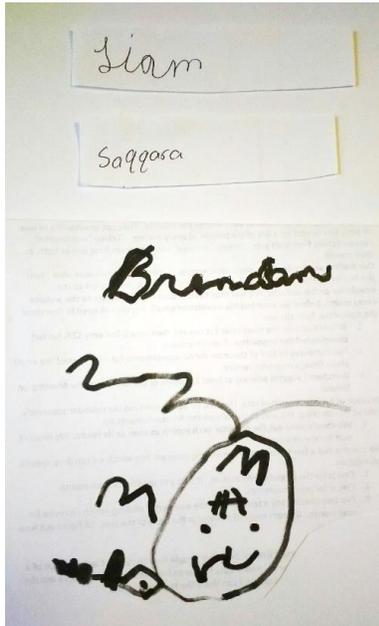
"Lebh Shomea is an Ecumenical Catholic Silent Retreat Center near Sarita, Texas. Its beautiful grounds, peaceful wooded walking trails and coastal bay -- along with the work of the resident community -- create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and introspection. Silence is observed at all times, except in our group gatherings. Accommodation is in individual rooms or cabins with private bath; meals are simple and nourishing. Participants are welcome to borrow books from the extensive library and are encouraged to take part in the Center's daily morning service."

Normally, we arrive on Thursday and leave on Sunday. It is perfectly acceptable to have only a two-night retreat if that works best for you. For most of us it takes a day or more to unload from the noise of the world in order to settle into "true self" and into a silence that allows us to hear with a "listening heart."

Each person or couple going is responsible for making reservations at Lebh Shomea, phone #: (361) 294-5369. The cost is around \$60 per person per night which includes 3 meals a day. **Lebh Shomea**

needs a head count as soon as possible. This in no way commits you to going but only helps in holding rooms for the retreat. Folks always add and drop out to days before the retreat. Plans change, For more information on Lebh Shomea Google “Lebh Shomea, House of Prayer”.

From our Children:



Liam: Meeting for Kids

Hi there! Would you like to come to Meeting? It might seem boring for children but don't worry, we have a playroom. They'll have fun in the quiet room. If you get hungry, don't worry, we have snacks.

Saqqara

I really like coming here because there's a lot of room to run and play and different activities to do. I also like it because there's a lot of nature and also quiet places. You could meet new people and do new things.

Brendan

Limes and lemons are sour. Limes and lemons are green sometimes, and they can be small. Limes and lemons can be at the store, or in a meadow. Hornets live in the meadow too. Hornets are bad things to be near because they have stingers that hurt you very badly.



Evelyn

Today Evelyn bounced two balloons between the three others in the room. Her effervescent joy enlivened us all.

Other News

Birthday Bash each First Sunday

Meeting's first consolidated Birthday Bash celebrated six birthdays for October. Now we're looking at the rest of the year. Jillian, our Master of the Revels, will have a full year calendar so each person can sign up for the month to be celebrated. We said cake, but this was ambrosia. Don't miss out. If you have a November birthday, send work QUICKLY to newsletter@saquakers.org

We Need a Treasurer for 2019

Our Treasurer, Bill W, is finishing his final year as Treasurer. We express our tremendous gratitude for his years of service to our Meeting. But now, we have the awesome task of replacing him. He has put in place software to make taking care of the books much easier. Bill's advice: "Friends just need to know the handling of funds is done responsibly." In other words, you don't have to be a financial wizard; you just have to keep track of details.

Concern for Late-Comers to Worship

Ministry and Oversight has received concerns about the distraction created when Friends arrive after 10, particularly the opening and closing of the two doors. To address this concern, Friends approved a Minute that: FMSA will keep the doors closed for the first 10 minutes of Meeting for Worship. Late-comers can wait outside and come in together. FMSA will try this for a 3-month period, beginning October 14th and then revisit in M&O and then bring back to Business Meeting for further discernment. It is suggested that those who arrive before 10 leave the benches nearest the door for those arriving later.

New Website, Facebook, Electronic Communications

The new website is now running more smoothly and is easier to navigate. We now send out announcements and notices of the newsletter. We cannot send attachments, so you need to download the newsletter from the website's newsletter page (<https://sanantonioquakers.org/newsletters/>). We also post our calendar and event notices on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SAQuakers/>).

Jim wants to train several others on how to manage the website and Facebook. Several people have stepped forward. If you are interested in helping out, please see Jim.

Ruth Lofgren

Our Friend Ruth Lofgren has been admitted to hospice. Various Friends are assisting her. Please hold her in the Light.



A Poem for Veteran's Day

November 11th

Euphemism

An innocuous substitute for
a dangerous term:
i.e, shock and awe,
to camouflage carpet bombing that
imitates the destruction of Dresden.
Or friendly fire, to disguise the fact
we just slaughtered our own.
Or Defense Department instead of
War Department, proving you can
fool some of the people some of the time.
Or collateral damage, concealing the mangled bodies
of women, men and children, done not on purpose.
Or, worst of all, PTSD, shell shock -
good speak to hide walking destruction,
the pulverized minds of men and women,
maimed in our name.
Enough! Enough of Euphemisms!
Name the horrors, the results of horrors,
so that we may own them.
Take them to heart.
Perhaps then we may come to a real word:
Peace.

Gretchen Haynes



Eyes Wide Open Exhibit
about the human cost of the Iraq War
– AFSC/Terry Foss

Facing Climate Change: An Op-Ed by Bill Sweet and Jim Spickard

Friends Bill and Jim wrote this Op-Ed for the San Antonio Express-News. The E-N chose not to print it, so Bill & Jim submitted it to our newsletter for publication and comment.

Fifteen months ago, San Antonio's City Council adopted the Paris Climate Accord, to reduce the carbon load on our atmosphere. To meet the Accord's goals, the City's Office of Sustainability set up six Technical Working Groups to develop detailed plans.

They've worked hard and made progress, but not everyone is on board. For example, CPS, a major carbon source in the City, plans to keep two of its coal-fired plants running for another 25 years or more. Two new studies tell us that we don't have that much time.

Both studies focus on tipping-points. Once carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gasses reach a certain level, then there's no way to stop a rapid temperature rise. The feedback loops will be too strong.

The first study, which appeared this July, compared current climate changes to those of the last 14 million years. If the earth's overall temperature rises maybe as little as 2°C (3.6°F) above preindustrial levels – we're already about 1°C – the nonlinear dynamics of positive feedback processes are highly likely to lock in much hotter conditions. This “poses severe risks for health, economies, political stability...and ultimately, the habitability of the planet for humans.”

The second study, published in August, calculated just what this means for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. They figured the Point of No Return (PNR): the year after which runaway warming will take us over the 2°C target by 2100. For example, if we replace carbon energy with renewable energy by 2% per year, the PNR is in 16 years, 2035. After that, we can't stop a hothouse world. If the rate is 5% per year, PNR is pushed back only until 2045. That's CPS's target year for taking its last two coal plants offline.

But it gets worse. Even if we reduce carbon at these rates by these PNRs, the study says we have only a 67% chance of meeting the 2°C by 2100 target. That's like playing Russian Roulette with two bullets in the six chambers!

If we want to be sure to avoid the hothouse, we only have until 2022 if we attain a 5% per year reduction. If we reduce more slowly, it's already too late. And even that just means that we'll stay below 2°C through 2100. Without active carbon removal, we'll pass 2°C and warming may still continue for centuries. Clearly, if we want our children and grandchildren to have a livable world, we need to start serious emissions reductions now!

Is this news? Not at all. These two studies support the results of other recent studies using different methods, all of which merely add details to James Hansen's testimony to Congress in 1989. He built on a 1977 National Academy of Sciences report, which built on much work going back 122 years. We've known for a long time that burning fossil fuels was getting humanity, and all living things, into trouble.

So get with it, San Antonio! The City's Technical Working Groups must set goals and define actions courageous enough to meet the threat. Mayor Nierenberg and the City Council must be powerful protectors of the future, so that San Antonio can celebrate its 600th birthday! CPS Energy needs to go carbon free by 2030!

But the problem is global. Senators Cornyn and Cruz, Representatives Castro, Cuellar, Doggett, Hurd, Smith, and those newly elected in November need to work energetically to save us and our children – and their children – from the threats that climate change poses to our health, to our economy, to our civil society and to our nation. We can, we must, leave a livable world for future generations.