

May 2019



The Friendly News

San Antonio Quakers

7052 N. Vandiver (at Eisenhower)
San Antonio, Texas 78209

Message Phone: 210.945.8456

Website: www.sanantonioquakers.org

Facebook: @saquakers

Clerk's Corner

Dear Friends,

San Antonio is still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health authorities and city leaders remind us about the dangers of mingling in public – both to ourselves and to others whom we might endanger. As I wrote last month in these pages, San Antonio Quakers have become artists-in-residence in our own homes, physically distancing ourselves from others out of concern for our collective well-being.

Though we have cancelled face-to-face activities, we continue to meet using technology. We use Zoom for Meeting for Worship on Sundays and for Wednesday evening Meetups. We have set up a new Facebook Group for interpersonal (and non-public) sharing, which so far include recipes and book ideas. We have other Zoom discussions and have even had our first Zoom Meeting for Business.

As one Friend put it, the Meeting seems to be finding its feet in the new situation. We are reaching out to each other to give and receive support and to build community.

Sign up to receive an email when this newsletter is posted at the Meeting website.

Write us at newsletter@saquakers.org if you wish a snail-mail copy.

This newsletter contains information about these events (*pages 3-5*). It also has several ideas about how we can care for ourselves and for the wider San Antonio community (*pages 5-6*). I am extremely thankful to those who contributed materials. Please take a special look at the following:

- Our Friends Helping Friends program, where we can trade skills and resources with others in the Meeting (*page 5*).
- Ways to donate resources, skills, and time to help the wider San Antonio Community (*page 6*).
 - A Quaker-led project to support COVID-19 testing that needs medically trained and non-medical volunteers.
 - Supporting a Friend's project to donate meals to hospital workers.
 - Letter-writing to help protect our atmosphere from unneeded methane flaring from gas and oil wells.
 - United Way's new clearinghouse for community needs and skills.
- A new "Get to Know Your Friends" column, so that we can learn more about each other. (*page 7*).
- An essay on gratitude and a fulfilling "Gratitude Challenge" (*pages 8-10*)

We also have a letter from Janet S., describing her and Ken's new life in Minneapolis (*pages 11-12*), Kellie's account of her marathon (*pages 12-13*), and some photos from our Meetinghouse (throughout). I have postponed other items for a later newsletter, but I encourage readers to submit their news and reflections. This is one of the ways we stay connected.

Many of us have found it hard to be so isolated for so long. We have baked, slept, gardened, binge-read, and followed too much news, besides whatever work-from-home projects we do. I, for one, am missing seeing my Quaker F/friends. That is why the wonderful contributions to this newsletter move me. I hope they move you, too.

-- Jim Spickard
Clerk & Newsletter Editor



May Query

Has your spiritual journey shifted due to the crisis? If so, how? If not, why?

Join Us for Worship and Conversation

San Antonio Friends will be meeting by Zoom until health authorities inform us that it is safe to return to our in-person activities. We will post changes on the calendar page of the Quaker website (<https://sanantonioquakers.org/calendar/>)

SUNDAYS:

- **Meeting for Worship 10-11am**
via Zoom: Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/776958184>
- **Post-Meeting Check-in & Discussion 11am-12pm** (Same URL)
 1. Topics change each week; see the [website calendar page](#) for details
 2. May 19th will be Business Meeting

TUESDAYS:

- **Course in Miracles 7-9pm**
via Zoom: Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/511347194>
password: 838904

WEDNESDAYS:

- **Midweek Quaker Meet-Up *NEW TIME* 7-8:30pm**
via Zoom: Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/862079888>

VARIOUS:

- **Committee Meetings**
Committee clerks will forward times & Zoom info to members.

How to Join a Zoom meeting

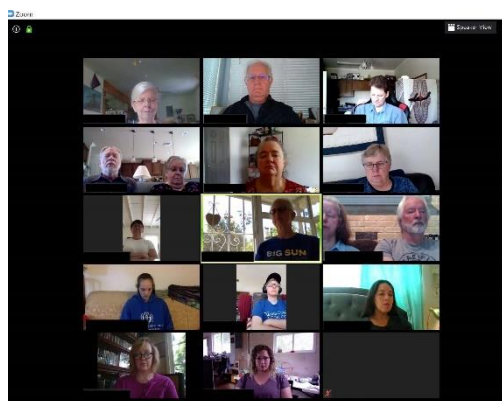
- **By Computer, Smartphone, or Tablet:** Your computer needs at least a microphone and ideally a video camera. (Most modern laptops have both built in.)
 1. Make sure that your microphone and video camera is turned on.
 2. Surf to the Zoom address listed for the event:
 3. Join the meeting with computer audio & video
 4. Mute your audio until you wish to speak
- **By Telephone:**
 1. Call the Zoom call-in number: +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston).
 2. Enter the Zoom meeting number:
 - Meeting for Worship: [776958184](#)
 - Course in Miracles: [511347194](#) (password 838904)
 - Midweek Conversations: [862079888](#)
 - Committee Meetings: *Check with your committee clerk*

*The Zoom room will open at 15 minutes before each meeting to help people who might struggle with the technology. **You do NOT need to have an account to join a Zoom meeting.***

Reflections on Meeting by Electronic Means

Sunday Meeting for Worship

We have a growing number of Friends attending our Sunday morning Meeting for Worship. It began in the low-to-mid teens and is now in the high twenties. People are now getting used to sitting in front of “a row of rectangular portraits”, as one Friend put it, but the worship has deepened, and the ministry is heartfelt. As was true of our recent regular worship, we spend the last few minutes sharing prayers, prayer-requests, joys, and sorrows. This often lead into rather deep reflections on our lives and on the world’s situation. Last Sunday’s conversation was particularly meaningful.



April Meeting for Business

On the 19th, about 20 Friends met for our first Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business by Zoom. It was both slower and faster than usual. Slower, because it was harder for the Clerk to read body-language, so he had to ask more often whether Friends had voiced everything that needed to be said. Faster, because committees came with prepared minutes, which everyone could read on the shared screen. We decided to give our childcare worker and our cleaner a gift of the amount that they would have been paid, were we still meeting in person. We decided to continue using the unarmed security patrol to check our property each night. We will revisit the latter decision in June, with a report in May from Property Committee about their current thinking.



We ended Business Meeting with a brainstorming session about new ways we can create community when we cannot be together physically. Ideas included virtual potlucks, food-bombing (dropping cooked food on each other’s doorsteps), and a Friends-only private group on Facebook that would enable deeper sharing than that medium allows when open to the public, among others. This last suggestion led Julie C. and Jim S. to create a:

“Quaker Community Conversations” Group on Facebook

This is a place for us to have conversations and keep in touch with each other in an informal fashion. Our posts and comments are not public; they can only be seen by group members. We

welcome members and attenders of San Antonio Friends Meeting to ask one Julie or Jim for an invitation. Alternately, you can write the Meeting Clerk to request one: clerk@saquakers.org

So far, Friends have shared photos, recipes, and suggestions for reading. More to come.

Wednesday Midweek Meet-up and Discussion: On “What’s Next after the Pandemic Fades”

At the April 29th Wednesday Zoom, Friends considered what actions we can take individually and collectively to change how society looks when this crisis abates. Amongst the frustration and the angst appeared suggestions that included a focus on the health care system and public health policy in particular.

We can see, in the wreckage, the inequalities that hit minorities and poor people the hardest in numbers of cases and in deaths. Lack of insurance, nutrition based on empty calories, and crowded living conditions all contribute to the “underlying conditions” of diabetes, overweight and heart disease.

As a Meeting, we can seek to network with others who share our concerns. Particularly in an election year, we can seek out candidates to commit to addressing public health policies that will change the status quo. During this pause in our daily lives, we can plan how to make our lives speak. Join in the conversation at the next Meet Up, Wed. May 6, **new time 7:00 [zoom: 862 079 888]**. Details on the Calendar Page of the Website: <https://sanantonioquakers.org/calendar/>

How We Can Help Each Other and Our Community

Friends Helping Friends

We all need help with things, and we can all find ways to help each other. This is truer than ever in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. And it’s harder to ask for and offer help when we don’t see each other face-to-face.

Friends Meeting wants to help. Ministry and Oversight Committee has agreed to connect Friends who need help with Friends who have help to give. **This isn’t charity; it’s community.** And it isn’t a one-way street, because everyone has something to give as well as something they need

- Maybe you need help with shopping, but you are able to provide a listening ear.
- Maybe you need someone to talk to but are good at finding people who can do repairs, minor tasks, or other service providers.

In either case, fill out the forms online and let our FHF Coordinator match needs with resources.

M&O reported to Business Meeting that we have far more people willing to offer things than have reported that they need them. Friends shared some of their reasons for this. They were encouraged to be creative about the kind of help they need. Since then, we have received the following requests:

1. A friend asks for someone to help with some basic mending of several items. Helpers need to pick up and return the items to the Friend who cannot leave her home. Contact Val if you can help.

2. A late-middle aged Friend in assisted living would appreciate weekly visits by a male Friend.
3. The Clerk seeks help finding a good home or homes for a large collection of Cook's Illustrated magazines. Contact Jim if you are interested.
4. The Clerk also has a large number of books available for loan. Eclectic topics.

Please visit the [Friends Helping Friends page on the Meeting website](#) and fill out the "Things I Need" and the "Ways I Can Help" forms.

Ways to Help the Wider San Antonio Community

Here are some ways to meet local needs:

1. **Roger May**, a Quaker-connected volunteer coordinator for Remote Area Medical, is looking for volunteers to help with the new RAM site in San Antonio. He sent us this flyer, saying "we are looking for both medical professionals and non-clinical volunteers. The latter will assist but will not have patient direct contact."
www.ramusa.org
2. **Meeting attendee Kai Nelsen** and her chef friend Michael Sohocki (Restaurant Gwendolyn) have put together a plan to donate meals to hospital workers, and they are hoping to find more donors to make the plan a reality. She asked if anyone from Meeting might be interested. See the website at <https://bit.ly/3fcv8bf>
3. **Friend Gary Whiting** is working with **Environment Texas** to lobby the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) to ban flaring and venting of methane from Texas oil and gas wells. Flaring, the burning off less lucrative natural gas while extracting oil, is the most carbon-intensive step of oil production. The Railroad Commission issues permits, resulting in increased carbon emissions and increased global warming. Gary has prepared a "Flaring Activist Toolkit", which you can download at <https://bit.ly/3ddb1lr>
4. **The San Antonio United Way** and **Bexar County** have launched a website where you can find organizations that need your particular skills. Visit <https://saunited4good.org/> to see what organizations need and what how you can help. Ideas include:
 - o **Box meals** for kids and senior citizens with the San Antonio Food Bank
 - o **Donate blood** at the South Texas Blood & Tissue Center
 - o **Create hygiene kits** for homeless people for the Department of Human Services. Match your skills to people's needs at <https://bit.ly/3d9bjjh>
 - o **Foster or adopt a homeless pet** through Animal Care Services, shelters, or San Antonio Pets Alive

Remote Area Medical® needs volunteers who can help at **drive-thru COVID 19 testing sites** across the country.

We are recruiting volunteers of all skill sets and backgrounds:

- Non-Clinical support
- Clinical providers (with flexibility in serving in non-clinical roles)

Volunteers can not be in the CDC High-Risk Categories:

- 65+
 - Nursing/Pregnant
 - Sick/Feeling unwell
 - Experiencing any health issues (diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, lung disease, or immunosuppression)
 - Infected with the coronavirus (COVID -19)
- Review the CDC list of those who are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19

We are looking for help in:

San Antonio, TX

For more information, please visit our website at www.ramusa.org

get to know your Friends

Friends Meeting of San Antonio

Greg Casillas A member of the Religious Society of Friends and sits on the FMSA Nominating Committee. He is the Assistant Director & Life Skills Program Manager for Thrive Youth Center. Greg is active in city-wide initiatives concerning the LGBTQ community and teaches yoga. He and his husband, John live in New Braunfels with dog Max, numerous cats & Mabel, the possum!



What is your comfort food?

Breakfast: Costa Rican gallo pinto, fried eggs, queso turrialba, baked plantanos and homemade tortillas

How many states and/or countries have you lived in?

5 states ~ Oklahoma, Texas, Florida, North Carolina & California
5 countries ~ USA, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Philippines & Nepal

Where did you attend your first Quaker Meeting?

Monteverde, Costa Rica

Which of the Quaker testimonies speaks to you?

Integrity. When I live my life with integrity, all of the other testimonies find space in my daily living.

Name one positive outcome from your COVID-19 quarantine experience.

“A reminder that peace is often found amongst chaos.”

1

Ocean or Mountains

MOUNTAINS

2

Coffee or Tea

SWEET TEA

3

Roses or Daisies

DAISIES

4

Winter or Summer

WINTER

Make this a regular feature! See Peggy D. for details

Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19

By Peggy Dial

Am I brave enough to find my way, in this time of COVID-19, through this spiral of fear as the unknown is revealed daily, hourly, minute by minute? Can I accept suffering, with the understanding that to live is to suffer? Will I choose living over dying a million times a day? Asking these questions serves a purpose. They help to remind us that bravery, acceptance and choice can lead us away from our own little worlds of disillusion. They can even reacquaint us with our graceful friend ~ GRATITUDE.

Bravery is about being courageous enough to simply stop all the fearful mental chatter. It is about ushering in a new approach to our current circumstance. Readjusting our focus from what we lack, what we have lost and what we cannot control to what we do have, what is present, and the freedom from control presents us with an opportunity for gratitude. We can act on this opportunity by meditating on all the gifts you do have, creating a list of what is present in your life - friends, family, pets, surroundings, community. We can use affirmation statements like "Today I will let things happen without worrying about the significance of each event"; "today I will be open to the process of change. I know that change is necessary to take me wherever I need to go"; "today, I step into the flow of life and release any attachment to the outcome." Are we brave enough to simply stop?

Accepting the truth that with life comes suffering seems self-evident but we are always blindsided when it arrives at our doorstep. Most of us imagine a happy life to be one without suffering. No one ever wants to consider the death of a loved one, loss of job, illness, addiction, homelessness, or a world-wide pandemic, and yet we can all know that we will experience two or more of these in our lifetime. It is by accepting this reality that we can hold all things more gently. Simple pleasures do not go unappreciated when death



and loss are clearly present. A loving glance from someone dear, the sight of wildflowers in bloom, a slow deep breath, the sound of children giggling, a wagging tail: noticing these little daily gifts as they are presented expands our capacity for joy and resilience. So, when suffering does arrive, our door will already be open and the kettle warming because we understand that whatever suffering brings, we are well fortified with the gifts that gratitude provides. Can we accept suffering?

Choice is a gift we rarely use wisely. In the past month, we have seen our “normal” daily lives come to an end and a new reality step into their place. This shift has uncovered a harsh truth: that it is up to us to choose life or death, in every moment and it always has been. If we find ourselves using the COVID-19 quarantine time to rest, start a new hobby, take a walk, read a book, try a new recipe, engage in social activism, call friends, garden, hold a loved one’s hand, create art & music, participate in uplifting verbal & virtual conversations, let the television go silent and tune out the media chaos then we are choosing to live: to be actively grateful for the lives we are living today. If we find ourselves frightened to go outside, reducing verbal or virtual contact with friends and family, mentally listing all the things that we can no longer do, feeling angry because this is happening to “me”, keeping the television on and feeding off the media chaos, grieving for what could have been or acting on an addiction, then we are choosing death... every minute consumed by fear and separation is loss of life. How many times did you die today? By intentionally choosing to be grateful for our lives and all the possibilities living brings, we have a unique opportunity to reimagine our path forward. What will we choose?

We are living in a time like no other we have known but we hold within ourselves the ability to move forward with grace and gratitude. These times need not be full of angst, anger, and pain. We are brave enough to stop and embrace gratitude. We have the capacity to experience joy along with suffering. We can use our gift of choice wisely to reimagine our future. Now the questions we need to ask ourselves are: What will our children learn from the choices we are making? What actions are we modeling for friends, family, and community? Will we look back on this time of COVID-19 with a sense of regret and failure or as the moment we engage life with love, compassion, and gratitude?



*Long-Billed Thrasher at the Meetinghouse
(photo by Keith Godwin)*

GRATITUDE CHALLENGE

30 days of Active Appreciation

Jump start your **JOY** metabolism

1) List 30 People, Things or Places you are **GRATEFUL** for

2) Once a day, engage in active appreciation for one thing on your list

A handwritten card or email of appreciation.

Make a phone call or plan a virtual meet up to say, sing or act out your gratitude.

Deliver homemade bread, sweets or savories.

If you have listed a place or thing, be creative in your gratitude:
donate to a non-profit, plant a tree, hang a bird feeder, pick up trash, volunteer, eat vegan for a day...

3) Fill in your Gratitude form

Make notes on when & how you offered appreciation then record how it made you feel.

4) Photograph your list and your gratitude in action

Post them on social media, share them with FMSA Facebook and Instagram for posting.

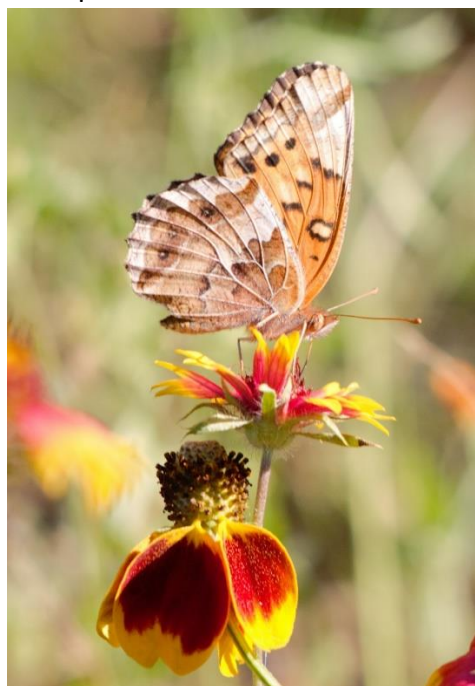


The **Gratitude Form** is posted on the Meeting website at <https://bit.ly/2z00vp0>.

Personal Reflections:

A Letter from Janet S. to Pam (*shared with permission*):

I was so pleased to get your message. Coincidence. I often think of our SA friends but specially you a few days ago. There was a full-page article on birds in our local newspaper and I remembered how you loved them and knew so much about them. I learned a little more. I didn't know there were messages flying into St Paul. I'm so sorry about your friend here. If there is anything I could do please let me know though I don't know what it would be since we have no car and are holed up right now like everybody else. In earlier times our daughter Jane has been very helpful, getting groceries, taking to us doctor appointments, etc. We actually have two granddaughters plus spouses here and now two great grandchildren, one having arrived since we arrived. That was special.



The Friends Meeting is very large with two meetings for worship on Sunday mornings held at different times with about 40 at each and then a smaller one on Wednesday evening. It's harder to get involved or get to know people though everyone is friendly and welcoming of course. Where we live is a large building divided into small apartments, housing about 80 residents. Jane put a lot of energy in finding a place for us, but we are paying for some luxuries we don't really need. However, it is an attractive place as "senior residences" go and there are quite a lot planned activities like lectures and such. Not only bingo! The staff are all very nice and there is a stress on community for everyone. It was a very big move for us in so many ways and neither of us realized how stressful it would be. We are still adjusting!

I must tell you of one event which took me out of the humdrum. A man in the meeting said he would like to show me his plane. After a couple of invites which I found were serious I went on the trip to this little airport. There was his very small plane with just two seats and encouragement to board. No harm done so I climbed in and he showed me some of the knobs on the dashboard. He suggested a short trip, so we took off. When we were well up and really flying, he said, without warning, now you are in control. I really was and it was kind of fun though I would not have passed a pilot's test. I may do it again. Nothing like that in San Antonio!

We are well and happy with each other. We have always been a little unrealistic about our ages but have had to recognize recently some changes do come with getting older. Unexpected. The two sons now living in California and Illinois have had their ups and downs but seem to have settled down and become adults at last. Ken has got a sister in England with her extended family and I still have a few relatives there. Sadly, we don't see any of them these days. In the present

crisis we are being kept safe and cared for. What a situation we are in. Maybe a few nasty bugs running around will bring us all closer together. Ken joins me in sending love to you and all our friends there.

-- Janet

Kellie's Marathon

As Friends know, I trained for my first marathon this past fall and winter. It was for the Bataan Memorial Death March, which commemorates those POWs who were forced to march 65 miles after the battle of Bataan in WWII, with little food or water or medical attention. Thousands died and thousands were held prisoner for years. This is the second time in the event's history that it was cancelled. They typically have around 10,000 participants. It's 26.2 miles through terrain at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. It was scheduled for March 15. I was going to participate with my two cousins (my age), my 22-year-old daughter (it would be her 4th time) and my 64-year-old mother (it would be her third).

Days before the event, they canceled it due to COVID-19. My cousin Sandy and I (it would have been the first marathon for both of us) decided to do our own marathon. We had trained too hard and long, and honestly, I wasn't sure that I had another one in me to do it again next year. The training was brutal, took up nearly a full Saturday, and was literally stressing my body (holding onto water weight, resting heart rate elevated, etc.).

So, on March 15, 2020, I did my first marathon through my mom's neighborhood and Franklin Mountains State Park in El Paso. We designed our own race bibs and medals, had virtual cheering sections on Facebook Live and my mom and daughter (who opted to skip since it wasn't their first) set up aid stations at miles 9 and 23.

We marched it (so not running) and finished in 10 hours and 20 minutes.

I felt great through about mile 15. After that, the adrenaline wore off, and I felt every step. By mile 18 it was excruciating: a pebble made its way into my shoe and started rubbing a hot spot, but I knew if I stopped and removed my shoe, I might not be able to get going again. By mile 20, I had to fight off sobs a few times, and I held on to the fact that every step took me the furthest I'd ever been on foot. After the final aid station at mile 23, I really thought about the experiences of those who actually suffered in the real Bataan Death March and how they didn't have their moms there at mile 23 with Gatorade, and if they could keep going, I could walk 3



more miles. At mile 24 one of my blisters burst and I thought my toe was falling off, but I knew if I stopped, I wouldn't be able to get going again. The last mile was back on pavement, and my spirits were high again. We reached the finish line on a decline, and it felt so good to get off of terrain.

About six minutes after we finished, the emotions hit me, and I started sobbing. I wasn't thinking about anything, but the emotions were just there. I couldn't even say which particular emotions I felt in the moment. Just there were too many of them and they apparently needed out. But afterwards, I felt a deep sense of accomplishment, connection, and pride. I felt like we had made the best out of a bad situation and rose to the occasion, which is what humans do in times of stress and uncertainty. It was just two women, out to prove something to ourselves, no matter the obstacles.

The following Saturday, which was my typical marathon long mileage day, I went for a 3-mile jog. It took less than 45 minutes (as opposed to HOURS to do a 14-mile march). And it felt GLORIOUS to have accomplished this feat and to not have to spend another Saturday training. Thank you to Friends who held me in the Light during my training and who cheered me on via Facebook the day of the event.



Friends Meeting of San Antonio
7052 N Vandiver
San Antonio, Texas 78209

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