



The Friendly News

San Antonio Quakers

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Dear Friends:

This month's newsletter is arriving early for two reasons.

- First, **the Quaker Spring Fair has been postponed until May 15th**, due to the expected rain on May 1st, our original date. It will be a neighborhood yard sale, 9am-1pm, with the Meeting focused on selling books and donated (not homemade) baked goods. See page 5 for details.
- Second, Meeting needs your wisdom on how and when we should resume using our Meeting Room. The level of COVID-19 transmission has declined enough that we can contemplate holding Meetings for Worship and other activities indoors. **We need your views on how this should be done.** We have posted notes from our recent Threshing Meeting on our website, and our Ministry Committee has identified 8 objectives that seem to have support among Friends. **Please read the report on page 3** along with the materials we have linked there. **Then send your reflections to ministry@saquakers.org**. This will help us discern the way forward.

Besides those items, the newsletter contains a list of upcoming events, including a **Silent Retreat on May 8th** at the Meeting House and a **forum on Quaker Religious Experience on May 12th** on Zoom.

Our other announcement is that Jim will be stepping down as Newsletter co-editor. Kellie P. will take over with our June issue.

-- Jim S. & Megan G., Newsletter Co-Editors



May Query

How can we open our hearts to communities to network and provide mutual aid locally and in the wider world?

Regular Events (by Zoom)

Here are the direct links for our weekly Zoom events. You do not need a Zoom account to join.

- **Hybrid Meeting for Worship – Sundays 10-11am**, followed by check-in and discussion: *Zoom and In-Person*
 - **In-Person on the Meetinghouse Porch**
(masked and distanced)
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
 - **Course in Miracles discussion – Tuesdays 7-8pm**; led by David
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom – ID # 988 3173 6394; passcode: 724708
 - **Midweek Forums – Wednesdays 7-8:30pm**
 - May 12: On Quaker Religious Experience
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom – ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
 - Check for forum updates on the Meeting Calendar: <http://bit.ly/3rK61CV>
 - **Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business – Wednesday May 19th 7-8:30pm**
 - Please review the agenda at <http://bit.ly/2BoFt4Y>
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom – ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
 - **Friday Morning Meeting for Worship – Fridays 8-8:30 am**
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom – ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
- For ALL Zoom Meetings: by telephone at +1 346 248 7799, then enter ID#*

Special Events

- **May 8th Silent Retreat:** 9am-3pm at the Meetinghouse. *See p 5*
- **May 12th Forum:** On Quaker Religious Experience *See p 5*
- **May 15th Quaker Fair:** 9am-1pm in the Meetinghouse parking lot. *See p 5*

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On Reopening the Meeting Room

By Jim Spickard

We are approaching the time when it will be safe for us to reopen the Meeting Room for Meetings for Worship, forums, and so on. We need to plan for that reopening: so that it is safe, so that it gives us a good worship experience, so that it can include as many of us as possible. On May 18th, Friends held a *threshing meeting* to identify the issues we need to address and to see if/where we have potential differences. That meeting was not designed to solve these differences, nor was it designed to come to firm decisions. Friends can review the notes from that meeting by surfing to <https://bit.ly/3tBq4nF> or visiting the [Post-COVID Resources page](#) on our website.

We now need to decide how to move forward. Ministry and Oversight has distilled the threshing meeting's comments into eight potentially compatible objectives. They are:

OBJECTIVES

1. Restore in-person Meeting for Worship and activities at the Meetinghouse to the center of Friends Meeting's life.
2. Minimize health risks to participants and visitors. (*See the "2 of 3 Rule on page 4."*)
3. Minimize disruption to the Meetinghouse and to Meeting for Worship.
4. Make it possible for everyone in the Quaker community to attend.
5. Make it possible for everyone to give and receive ministry.
6. Facilitate everyone's full participation in worship.
7. Facilitate everyone's full participation in forums and business.
8. Make it possible to clerk the above activities.

We would like you to reflect on these objectives and on the comments raised at the threshing meeting (see the link above).

Please send your reflections to the members of M&O at ministry@saquakers.org

We need these by May 10th, so that M&O can discern Friends' readiness to reopen the Meetinghouse.

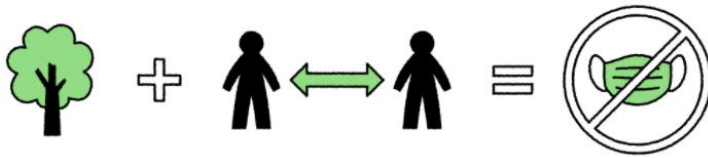
If Friends are in unity with the above objectives, we will form an Ad-Hoc Committee on Reopening to bring one or more proposals to Business Meeting.



The 2 of 3 Rule for Preventing COVID Spread

To lower risk for Covid-19, make sure your activity meets two out of the following three conditions: outdoors, distanced and masked.

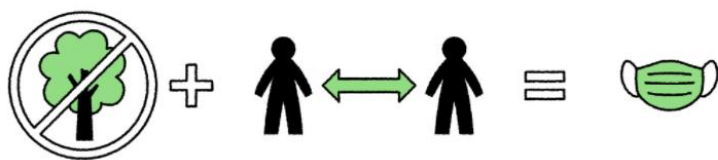
Outdoors + Distanced = No Mask Needed



Outdoors + No Distance = Mask Needed



Not Outdoors + Distanced = Mask Needed



COVID's continued presence in San Antonio calls for us to obey the "2 of 3 Rule". Here is the [New York Times'](#) graphic:

This graphic presumes that we do not know people's vaccination status (which is likely) and that we have installed a good air filtration system (a matter that the Ad-Hoc Committee will address.)

As you can see, holding activities inside the Meeting Room calls for masks plus six feet of distance between people.

That probably limits the number of people who can attend Meeting for Worship in person to about 30. It also requires rearranging the benches and chairs so that they are farther apart.

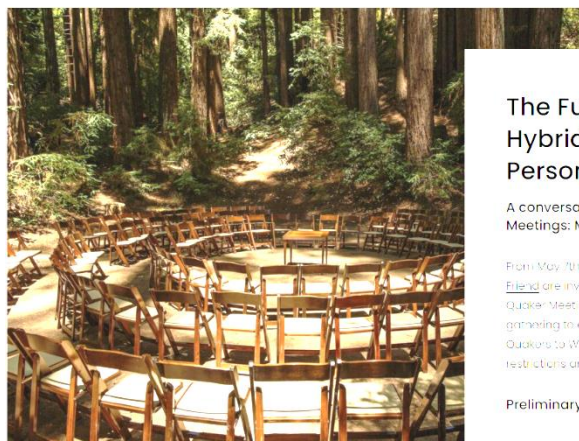
If and when the pandemic passes, we can likely admit more people.

Workshop on the Future of Worship

Ben Lomond Quaker Center and The Western Friend are sponsoring a workshop on the future of Quaker worship. It will be online from Friday evening, May 7th, through Sunday morning, May 9th.

Unfortunately, it interferes with our own Silent Retreat (see the next page). But some Friends may wish to see what Quakers in various parts of the country have come up with to maintain their communities in the post-COVID age.

Get more information at <https://www.futureofworship.org/>



The Future of Worship: Hybrid, Online, & In Person

A conversation among Western Quaker
Meetings: May 7th to 9th, 2021

From May 7th to 9th, Quaker Center & Western
Friend are inviting representatives from Western
Quaker Meetings and other Friends for an online
gathering to explore ways that are opening for
Quakers to Worship together after pandemic
restrictions are lifted.

Preliminary schedule listed below.

Coming Events

Quaker Fair ~~May 1~~ **NOW MAY 15th**

Yes, the Fair is back in time for Mother's Day and Graduation. Building on our success, it will be a neighborhood yard sale in the parking lot. Meeting will feature books and baked goods [donated, not home baked this year].

We will follow CDC guidelines re masks, distancing, and sanitizers. F/friends please wear FMSA tee-shirts & name tags, bring shopping bags, invite family, friends, and neighbors.

So, put the date on your calendar May 1 with rain date May 15. The timetable is:

- 7:30: set up tables & tents;
- 8:00: Friends & neighbors set up;
- 9:00-1:00: sell, then take everything down.

May 8th Silent Retreat: 9:30am-3:30pm, rain or shine

Simone Weil, a spiritual philosopher, mystic, and radical seeker of truth in the 20th century wrote:

"Waiting patiently in hope and expectation is the foundation of the Spiritual life."

For Weil, waiting patiently in humility was the mystical way to the heart of God. Indeed, waiting in silence upon God is primary to the Quaker Faith. Still, waiting in silence together takes practice until it becomes a joyous sharing.

You are invited to a more intense experience of silence, a Silent Retreat at the Meetinghouse on Saturday May 8th, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm.

You may come for: the full time -- the morning (9:30 – 12) -- the afternoon (12 – 3:30).

[CLICK HERE FOR A DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND SCHEDULE](#)

Kindly RSVP for what suits you best to jonitebo@aol.com or davidbristol128@gmail.com

- *Masks Required, Distance Respected.*
- *Participants may spend the entire retreat outside if they wish.*
- *Please bring your own sack lunch (and chair if you care to).*
- *Unfortunately, we cannot provide childcare.*

May 12th Forum: "What Canst Thou Say?"

7-8pm on Zoom: Led by Joni Mize

An entry from The Journal of John Woolman, his autobiography published posthumously in 1774. Chapter IV, paragraph 1 –

"The 13th day, 2nd month, 1757. Being then in good health and abroad with Friends visiting families, I lodged at a Friend's house in Burlington, and going to bed about the time usual with me, I woke in the night and my meditations as I lay were on the goodness and mercy of the

Lord, in a sense whereof my heart was contrite. After this I went to sleep again, and sleeping a short time I awoke. It was yet dark and no appearance of day nor moonshine, and as I opened my eyes I saw a light in my chamber at the apparent distance of five feet, about nine inches diameter, of a clear, easy brightness and near the center the most radiant. As I lay still without any surprise looking upon it, words were spoken to my inward ear which filled my whole inward man. They were not the effect of thought nor any conclusion in relation to the appearance, but as the language of the Holy One spoken in my mind. The words were, "CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DIVINE TRUTH," and were again repeated exactly in the same manner, whereupon the light disappeared."

The next paragraph continues with his preparation and plans for traveling to visit the "southern parts". There is no mention of, no further reference to, what sounds like a brief, powerful personal experience. It is as if John Woolman just took it in stride. Imagine your own reaction to such a phenomenon.

There is so much about this passage to explore – contrite meditations, a radiant light in the room, being still and watchful, words which fill inwardly, the Holy One, and "certain evidence of divine truth"! For someone else this event might qualify as a revelation and/or call for the founding of a new religious sect.

Friends, for the Wednesday May 12th Forum @ 7 PM, you are cordially invited to join in a worshipful conversation about the experiential nature of Quakerism. Can we learn to understand we are an integral part of the ongoing "creation", worthy of holy acknowledgement; can we get to where we see that trusting the mystery as much as possible leads to the miraculous? Can we take the unveiling of truth, aka the apocalypse, in stride?

The Journal of John Woolman is available for free on Google Books, but it's not a homework assignment.

I look forward to facilitating this exploration. Thank you, Joni Thibault Mize



News from Friends

Please Test the 'Last Wishes' Form

We are all getting older. Though that beats the alternative, it means that we need to plan for death. Most of us have wishes, though fewer of us have written them down and fewer still have stored those writings in a place where relatives and friends/Friends know to find them.

A couple of years ago, Ministry and Oversight held a series of discussions on 'Last Wishes', to give Friends a chance to think about the topic. Out of that arose a direction to provide a form on which Friends could record their wishes, that the Meeting would either store (securely!) or return in a nicely formatted paper document. This would include such things as:

- Whether you want San Antonio Meeting to hold a memorial service and, if so, whether you have specific wishes about it.
- Things you would want in a memorial minute or an obituary. (E.g.: parents' names, birthplace, family members, a short life-history, work & accomplishments, favorite pastimes, your history with Quakers, etc.)
- Who will be handling your affairs, notifying others of your death, etc.

We have posted a draft form on our website at <https://sanantonioquakers.org/last-wishes-form/> We request that you test it, to see where it needs improvement. Then send your comments to us at ministry@squakers.org. You are welcome to use fake names, information, etc.; at this point, we are just testing the form. Thanks!!

South Central Yearly Meeting Epistle (selections):

Please read the entire epistle at <https://bit.ly/3aIL8RH>

Greetings in the name of peace, love, and the Light! The South Central Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) met via Zoom this year for our annual sessions. ...

We continued last year's theme of "Loving in the Light: Quaker Engagement in Times of Crisis, Part II." ... Friends from our Arkansas-Oklahoma Quarterly Meeting discerned the need to revisit this theme and challenged us to dig deep, be bold and love fiercely as we sought guidance from the Spirit to address the crises of today that we, as people of a shared faith, must meet with integrity, unity, love, and peace.

We discussed race relations in our country, climate change, police brutality, economic justice, extreme political polarization, and political violence. We acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us as individuals, monthly meetings, and as a yearly meeting. Throughout our sessions, we aimed to act in love, peace, and charity, guided by Spirit and our shared faith. One seasoned Friend noted that people embrace the idea that Friends collectively discern a way forward, and that there's power in having the strength of that communal discernment to illuminate our path. The wisdom of these sage voices continues to bless us as we walk in unity to seek Truth.

Quaker author and activist Eileen Flanagan guided our week-long session events and delivered the keynote speech. In it she shared her insights and experiences on how we as Friends are called to engage

with the world we live in, and to work for the world we want. Eileen shared stories of her path in activism, particularly her work with the Earth Quaker Action Team opposing mountaintop-removal coal mining. It gave us a new perspective for the crises we face and how to approach them. She also reminded us of our responsibility—our duty even—to listen for God’s call by challenging injustice and laboring with love and perseverance until we achieve a society and a world where peace, harmony, unity, charity, integrity, and equality are the norms, not the outliers. She recalled the struggles of the civil rights movement and shared the wisdom of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said, “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice; and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

We saw that while we stand at an inflection point in the climate crisis, we see the growing urgency of the danger and injustice faced daily by people who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color. We must now act with love and finally do the work to create that just, peaceful, and equitable society for all. And then we must sustain it with love. We call on Friends everywhere to answer God’s call and join us in this work. ...

Our spirits and our screens came together in community, yet we miss joining Friends at Greene Family Camp. We wholeheartedly look forward to our next in-person gathering, date uncertain, for our Easter weekend retreats in the sweet spring countryside of central Texas. God has richly blessed and ordained the work of the South Central Yearly Meeting. We continue to be in community with you, each other, and Friends all over the world as we work for that sacred time when peace may prevail on Earth and in the hearts and minds of all who inhabit it. Sandra Cronk once wrote, “Peace is a gift, but it does not come magically through our passivity. Only in our faithful response to God’s call do we receive God’s peace.”

Write Letters on Behalf of SCYM’s Minute on No-Knock Warrants and Police Reform

Yearly Meeting approved a minute calling for no-knock search warrants to be banned by all levels of government for all levels of law enforcement. You can read the full minute at <https://bit.ly/3dVxRr2> ; here is the key paragraph:

SCYM supports legislation to ban no-knock warrants at federal, state, and local levels. Further, Friends support a requirement that all warrants be served by identifiable uniformed officers wearing active body cameras. Ending no-knock warrants at all levels of law enforcement is an aspect of equal protection under the law.

The minute notes that “people die as the result of specific police training and tactics”, which means that those tactics need to be changed.

Yearly Meeting Friends are organizing to write letters to our Texas Senators Cornyn and Cruz and to their key staffers who handle justice issues. Joni M. has created a template for individuals to write emails, which you can download from <http://sanantonioquakers.org/Docs/SCYM%20Letter%20Template%20on%20Police%20Reform.docx> . Fill in the yellow spaces with your information and modify the email as you wish. It is written to Senator Cornyn and his staff person. To write Senator Cruz and staff, replace the items marked in green with the information at the bottom of the template.

Wider Quaker World

FCNL Monthly Activities

There is a divine ecology at work in the world that calls us to live in accordance with the “design of creation,” as John Woolman puts it. FCNL believes that legislation supporting environmental justice for all can bring us closer into alignment with that sacred ecology. It will return the right to a healthy environment for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, who have been unjustly deprived of that right for decades.

On March 18, Rep. Donald McEachin (VA-04), Rep. Raúl Grijalva (AZ-03), and Sen. Tammy Duckworth (IL) reintroduced the Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021), which aims to advance environmental justice and health equity for all underserved communities.

Among other provisions, the bill authorizes \$75 million annually for environmental justice grant programs; requires agencies to include meaningful community involvement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and supports more equitable access to the outdoors. Urge your legislators to co-sponsor the Environmental Justice for All Act today. Contact your legislators through this link: <https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/32303/>

American Friends Service Committee's Writings to Inform and Support your Activism

Tell President Biden: Reopen the U.S. border to asylum seekers: Over a year ago, the Trump administration closed the southern border to asylum seekers, deporting many back to dangerous conditions—against the advice of public health experts. Biden must reverse this draconian policy, stop these deportations, and protect the health and human rights of all who seek refuge.

Helping refugees heal from trauma: In Dadaab refugee camps, AFSC and partners provide counseling and other vital services to refugees and asylum seekers from Somalia and other African countries, writes AFSC's Zaina Kisongo.

New bill would block U.S. from funding Israel's abuse of Palestinian children: The bill, HR 2590, sends a message to the Biden administration “that members of Congress continue to show concern for Palestinian rights and want to establish measures of accountability for U.S. aid to Israel,” says AFSC's Jennifer Bing. (Electronic Intifada)

Why we need a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants: As U.S. immigration policy continues to threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions in the U.S., we need legislation that honors immigrants as members of our community, writes AFSC's Peniel Ibe.

What we want to hear in Biden's address to Congress: The address, scheduled for April 28, is an opportunity for the president to talk openly about confronting racism, militarism, and economic injustice—and moving the country toward a future where all people have the resources they need to thrive.

Marking AFSC's 104th anniversary: On April 30, 1917, a group of young Quakers founded AFSC to give young conscientious objectors ways to serve their country during World War I without joining the military or taking lives. Instead many drove ambulances, ministered to the wounded, and helped rebuild war-ravaged communities. [Read more about AFSC's history.](#)

Quakers Behaving Badly (a book review):

By Jim Spickard

You probably know that there are many kinds of Quakers. Some worship in silence, waiting for the Spirit to speak, as we do in San Antonio. Others have pastors and ‘programmed worship’ – which means their Meetings look a lot like Protestant churches but with periods of silent worship alongside the sermons, hymns, and so on. Some, like us, do not tell attenders what to believe; we trust the Spirit to guide us and welcoming insights from all quarters. Others are comfortable specifying ‘Quaker beliefs’ without enforcing uniformity, while still others demand faith statements, such as the 1887 Richmond Declaration. These divisions are not new; they go back to the 19th century, when they caused much turmoil in the Society of Friends.

They do so today as well. Stephen Angell and Chuck Fager have compiled histories of four 21st-century separations in pastoral-style Yearly Meetings: Indiana, North Carolina, Northwest, and Wilmington (Ohio). The conflicts were over attitudes toward doctrine, the Bible, the extent of Yearly Meeting authority over local Meetings, and – no surprise – LGBTQ+ inclusion. Evangelical Friends expelled liberal Meetings in Indiana YM and Northwest YM. They left Wilmington YM to form their own group. And they forced North Carolina YM to close down, ending its 320-year run as one of the oldest Yearly Meetings in America.

These three books give us the (metaphorically) gory details, showing how the factions violated Quaker process and even their own ‘books of discipline’ – the manuals that the Yearly Meetings adopt to govern themselves. They track the events and provide the documents to show what happened. Fager is the better writer, but Angell is the better scholar. Both interview Friends on multiple sides of each controversy. They show Friends’ anguish at the separations and the hurt that happens when Friends let differences over doctrine, governance, and (other people’s) sexuality divide them.

But then: Angell and Fager are progressive Friends, as am I. We have a hard time letting other humans tell us what we are supposed to believe. These books do, however, show the humanity of people on all sides.

They will be in the Meeting Library soon, available for reading.



Food for Thought

Gardening as Resistance: Notes on Building Paradise

By Maria Popova

“Resistance” has always been a funny word to me — one without direct translation in my native Bulgarian It contours something necessary but not sufficient — while ennobling and empowering in its implication of defying wrongness, it limits its own power by ending at what is to be eradicated, without indication of what is to be grown in its place and how. In this respect, the resistance approach to human nature (and the consensual collective byproduct of human natures we call society) is like the pesticide approach to nature. ...





But maybe — and that is what redeems and consecrates our finite human lives and our limited powers — within those parameters, there is space enough and spirit enough to resist what is poisonous to the ideological soil we call culture and persist in planting, for as long as we have to live and with as much generosity as we have to give, something lush and beautiful. That we might never live to see it bloom might just be okay. To have planted the seeds is satisfaction enough worth living for.

Brainpickings, April 23, 2021 -- Read the full essay at <https://bit.ly/3eydlvE>

I KNOW THE WAY YOU CAN GET

poem by Hafiz (14th century Persian poet)

I know the way you can get
When you have not had a drink of Love:

Your face hardens,
Your sweet muscles cramp.
Children become concerned
About a strange look that appears in your eyes
Which even begins to worry your own mirror
And nose.

Squirrels and birds sense your sadness
And call an important conference in a tall tree.
They decide which secret code to chant
To help your mind and soul.

Even angels fear that brand of madness
That arrays itself against the world
And throws sharp stones and spears into
The innocent
And into one's self.

O I know the way you can get
If you have not been drinking Love:

You might rip apart
Every sentence your friends and teachers say,
Looking for hidden clauses.

You might weigh every word on a scale
Like a dead fish.

You might pull out a ruler to measure
From every angle in your darkness
The beautiful dimensions of a heart you once
Trusted.

I know the way you can get
If you have not had a drink from Love's
Hands.

That is why all the Great Ones speak of
The vital need
To keep remembering God,
So you will come to know and see Him
As being so Playful
And Wanting,
Just Wanting to help.

That is why Hafiz says:
Bring your cup near me.
For all I care about
Is quenching your thirst for freedom!

All a Sane man can ever care about
Is giving Love!"

Take a Forest Bath

by M.P.

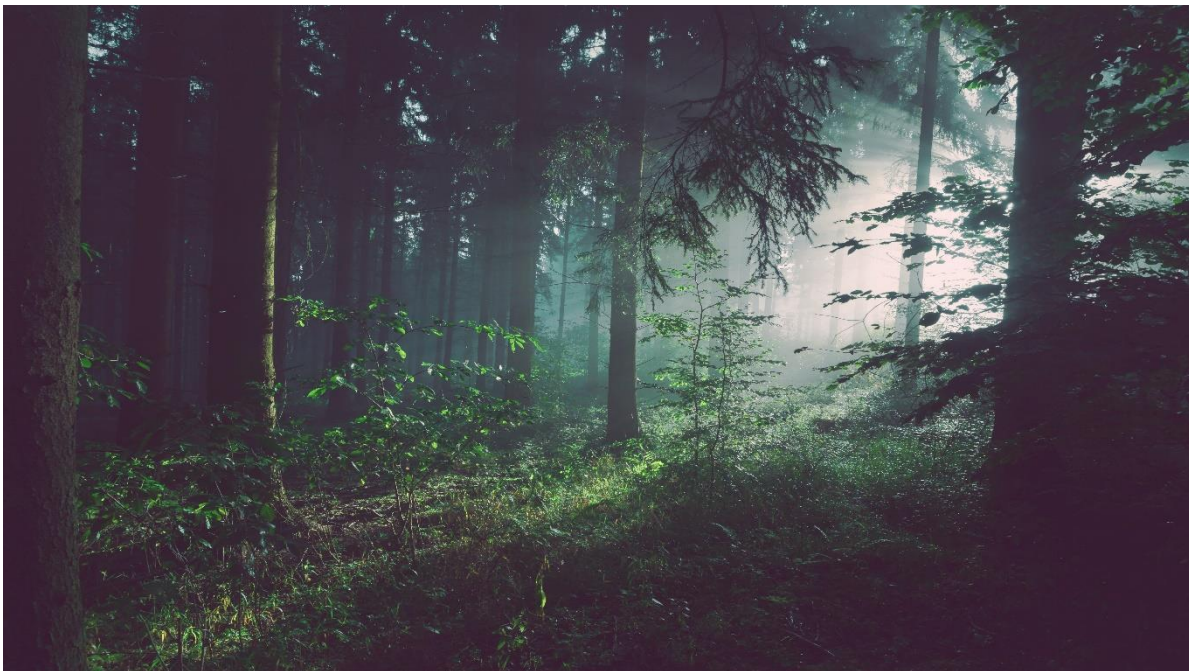
I've recently come across a phenomenon called "Forest Bathing." No, it is not taking a shower in the forest, but is the process of meditating in nature, allowing your senses to be flooded by your natural surroundings. With the pandemic (hopefully) coming to an end, I am feeling the need to be out in nature more often, and what a better way to further our Quaker practice than forest bathing!

Here is a blurb from a 2019 [National Geographic](#) article about the practice, by Sunny Fitzgerald.

"Whether you call it a fitness trend or a mindfulness practice (or a bit of both), what exactly is forest bathing? The term emerged in Japan in the 1980s as a physiological and psychological exercise called shinrin-yoku ("forest bathing" or "taking in the forest atmosphere"). The purpose was twofold: to offer an eco-antidote to tech-boom burnout and to inspire residents to reconnect with and protect the country's forests.

The Japanese quickly embraced this form of ecotherapy. In the 1990s, researchers began studying the physiological benefits of forest bathing, providing the science to support what we innately know: time spent immersed in nature is good for us. While Japan is credited with the term shinrin-yoku, the concept at the heart of the practice is not new. Many cultures have long recognized the importance of the natural world to human health."

I just booked my first guided Forest Bath walk. However, you do not need a guide to do this practice. This website has a [guide](#) on getting started. I suggest going for a walk, or sitting somewhere in a green space to start. Listen, turn off your phone, and observe. This mindful practice will allow your mind to relax, and for nature to entertain, inspire, or relax you. Give yourself over to nature, and take a forest bath.



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