



The Friendly News

San Antonio Quakers
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A Quaker Reflection on Christmas

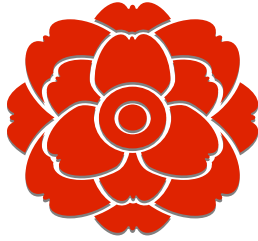
By Gill Sewell [Britain Yearly Meeting]

Early Quakers did not observe Christmas nor mark other 'times and seasons'. They believed that no day was more holy than any other, and believed that each day, and all of life, was sacred (*Quaker Faith & Practice* 27.39 and 27.42). Today, as with so many things in the Quaker community, there is a full spectrum of practices and responses.

There are those who do the full Christian event to mark the birth of Jesus with candles, carols, presents and Christmas pudding, and others who will observe simply and quietly. There are also those who will choose not to mark this Christmas season in any way, but who nonetheless give daily witness to their faith.

Whilst I experience this sense of the 'sacred always' I do, like many Quakers, find times and seasons helpful markers from which to reflect and rejoice. I delight in the new spring buds, the crisp autumn leaves, the wisps of breath. advent as a time of deepening darkness with the promise of new light to follow.

Continued on page 4



December Query During the holiday season, in the spirit of peacemaking, how can we find in the wider cultures, those values and activities that are in harmony with Quaker values?

Our Meeting House stands on Payaya People’s land.

REGULAR EVENTS

- **Sunday Meetings for Worship**
10-11am, in-person in the Meetinghouse AND on Zoom.
 - **Children’s Program 1st & 3rd Sundays**
 - **[CLICK HERE to join by Zoom](#)**
ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
- **Sunday Forums: 11:30-12:30**
[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
- **1st Sunday Potluck Lunch**
- **3rd Saturday “Meeting for Weeding”**
- **3rd Sunday Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business**
join by Zoom – ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
- ***For ALL Zoom Meetings: by telephone at +1 346 248 7799, then enter ID#***

Please send January news, pictures & events by 12/23/2022 to newsletter@saquakers.org

Special Events

- Dec 4 Potluck lunch & Conversation 11:15**
Celebrate Birthdays July through December
- Dec 11 Match Your Gifts and Interests to service with the Meeting**
- Dec 24 Christmas Eve Worship and Simple Meal: Set up 5:30, Worship 6, Eat 7**
- Dec 25 Worship 10 – 11**
- Jan 1 Worship 10 – 11**
- Jan 8 Potluck lunch & Conversation 11:15**

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News of San Antonio Friends Meeting

Dec 4 Potluck is Everybody's Birthday [July to January]. It's time to celebrate the half/year birthdays with a **cake decorated by the children.**

Dec 11 Let's try 'Speed Dating' to learn about opportunities for service with the Meeting. You are invited to bring your coffee/tea and snack to bench hop. Learn how Friends keep the place going with no paid staff and no one in charge. Is it magic? Almost. See how your gifts and interests fit with service to the Meeting.

Dec 24 is our traditional Christmas Eve celebration. We will set up tables and luminaria made by the children from 5:30 then Worship from 6:00. At 7:00 we enjoy tamales and beans and whatever else Friends bring – salads, sides and desserts. Everyone is welcome whether or not they bring something. There is always more than enough.

Dec 25 and Jan 1 will be regular worship but no Potluck on New Years Day. We'll save that for Jan 8.

Now is the time for all good Friends to come to the aid of the Meeting. End of the year donations can make up the difference in the 2022 budget. The budget calls for \$31,325; as of 11/20 contributions were \$57,900.

430+

Realizing the Memorial Garden took a giant step forward in November with the pouring of the walkway from the porch down to the stone circle. The slope is gentle, but will require hand rails for complete safety. This will put the project over the proposed budget. Other projects include refurbishing the entrance gates [in progress] and replacing the restroom doors. Code at the time of building required separate men's and women's room. Now all three will be uni-sex.

Newer friends attending worship are the concern of Ministry, Care & Guidance (MCG). While a genuine welcome is always given, MCG committee members are considering more formal ways to introduce Quakerism, such as an orientation series via Zoom at times convenient to these attenders. As we have noticed, you don't have to be on MCG to have conversations during fellowship time.

South Central Yearly Meeting is the regional umbrella organization covering meetings in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. We hold Annual Sessions around the Easter weekend via zoom and in person at Greene Family Camp near Waco, TX. [Apr 2 to Apr 9]. A full schedule will be available shortly on the Yearly Meeting website and summarized in these pages.

Continued from page 1 Celebrating in community

We humans want to celebrate in community, perhaps remember those who've died, perhaps to celebrate new and burgeoning relationships – and also our sense of belonging. Recognising too, that for some there may be little to celebrate – in poverty, isolation or war-torn zones. Globally the world has perhaps held too much darkness this year with several political leaders unable to beam shards of goodness and light.

As nights draw in, it is a reminder to me that I need to hold my spark of light faithfully and boldly, witnessing in the darker corners of my community. Holding and living by the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity, and care of the environment remains a challenge in my preparations for a Christmas celebration. I make donations (including at the food bank), try to make good ethical choices with my purchases, and identify ways in which to share.

Quakers mark Christmas in different ways but I will spend Christmas Eve looking up at the stars and hoping fervently that the seven billion people on this planet will indeed show good will to one another.

***Gill Sewell** works on ministry, outreach and safe-guarding. Her work is about supporting Quaker meetings to be loving, all-age, and inclusive communities and to help Quakers be well-known and widely understood.*

Quaker Children and Christmas

It's not easy raising Quaker children in our society. They are bombarded with commercialism, sword play, fierce competition and outright lying. How can Quaker values sink in when encountered for an hour a couple of times a month? It's the same with the "Spirit of Christmas." Most of us came to Friends from other faiths and brought those traditions with us. We work at blending those with Quaker expectations.

John and I raised two daughters with all those pressures. We tried to counter the myths of Santa Claus, and free gifts down the chimney. [We didn't have a chimney, so that helped.] We helped the girls make gifts for grandparents and friends, so it was more of an exchange. We asked them not to tease other children who did believe in Santa. And we sang the songs along with them. They grew up to be fine Quaker women. I can't offer much more than this. But you parents, today, can exchange ideas of what works for you.

Gretchen Haynes [11/16/2022]

To The Rescue

Days after I wrote the above, came word of a project that may meet the challenge:

The Parent Mutual Support Group (PMSG) offers parents the opportunity to meet via zoom in small groups (5-7) for one hour every two weeks for eight sessions. These will be led by two experienced Quakers and arranged by time slots. Parents from the four-state Yearly Meeting area will be invited to join.

The parents can connect, share their joys and concerns, welcome the Spirit into their daily lives, feel the support of Quaker Meetings, be glad and sad with each other, and hold each other in the Light. Ideally, the groups will begin in the second week of January

and conclude in May 2023. If this sounds interesting to you, please contact Gretchen in person or by jmhaynes@earthlink.net to get more information and sign up.

The Children's Program

The Program saw a burst of activity in November, with two families traveling from Fredericksburg. Some children made pottery bowls and tiles which they painted in bright acrylic colors. Everyone made bookmarks out of Christmas cards. And eight held the first Young Friends Meeting for Business to discern [without voting] what flavor cake and frosting they should make for the December Six-month Birthday Party. Edith, clerk, and Piper, recording clerk, reported to the adult meeting, which approved their report.

Thank you, Quiet

San Francisco Meeting has been experimenting with a plan to schedule classes in the Sunday School so that children – and teachers – could attend meeting for worship. . .

It has proved a happy surprise to find that even the younger children are often able to attend meeting quietly for a much longer time than their parents had thought possible. It is naturally hard to know just how much value worship has for these little ones, but at the end of meeting, one of our two-year-olds recently said, "Thank you, Quiet." . . .

[The] benefits of having children worship with us seem to outweigh the difficulties. Parents have welcomed the warm acceptance and cooperation of those who do not have children and feel that this response has helped the Meeting to grow in unity. The children's little noises help us realize that the silence we seek comes not from an absence of external sounds but from within.

– *San Francisco Monthly Meeting (1962)*

Wider Quaker World *Friends Journal* *Introducing the Podcast*

430+

Quakers Today features writers, musicians, and thinkers who are seeking wisdom and understanding in a rapidly changing world. We do not pretend to have all the answers. Instead, we have a place where you can hear people speak from the heart, grapple with faith, and share the insights they have found along the way. It is also a place where you will have the opportunity to share your own insights, reflections, and questions. Hosted by Peterson Toscano, *Quakers Today* is a project of The Friends Publishing Corp. Season One of Quakers Today is sponsored by Quaker Voluntary Service (**QVS**.)

Quakers, Indian Boarding Schools, and Indigenous Justice Today

By [Sandra Boone Murphy](#)

In 1819, the United States enacted a series of policies that led to the creation of Indian boarding schools across the nation. The stated purpose was educational assimilation. But in practice, the government systematically removed Indigenous children from their communities and placed them in institutions far from their homes, with the true goal of cultural annihilation.

Friends were complicit in this era, having run some of these schools. For generations, we have largely suppressed our faithful voices, remaining quiet on our benches and beyond. The time for acknowledgement, truth, and reconciliation is long overdue. In June 2021, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) announced the creation of a [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#) to explore and document the era of Indian boarding schools. In May 2022, that initiative issued a [preliminary report](#) and the findings are devastating. (Find the entire article in the [Nov. issue of Friends Journal](#))

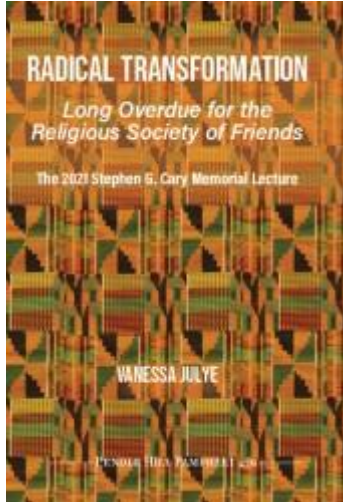


Pendle Hill's Reading Group (January)

Jan 18, 2023

Hosted by Janaki Spickard Keeler

Pendle Hill's Reading Group returns! Our Reading Group focuses on Pendle Hill pamphlets and other Quaker readings, gathering to consider queries about the reading in a spirit of [worship-sharing](#).



In January, we will be reading our recent pamphlet *Radical Transformation: Long Overdue for the Religious Society of Friends* (PHP #476) by Vanessa Julye. You can purchase a copy of this popular publication at the following links: [PH pamphlet](#) (printed edition) [Amazon Kindle](#) (e-book) [Barnes & Noble Nook](#) (e-book)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Brave & Constant: Annual Meeting 2022

NOVEMBER 16 - 20, 2022 | WASHINGTON, D.C. | IN-PERSON & ONLINE

Over the course of five days, we undertook significant work. Friends gathered for Friends Committee on National Legislation’s (FCNL’s) 79th Annual Meeting—and our first hybrid gathering. As General Committee clerk Mary Lou Hatcher reminded us, we gathered in Washington, D.C., and in person all around the country.

In our business, the General Committee approved our legislative priorities for the 118th Congress (2023-2024) and looked forward to the coming year’s work to develop FCNL’s next strategic plan. We reflected on and celebrated our community’s advocacy and our staff’s leadership and challenged ourselves to live into our aspirations of a society with equity and justice for all. And we lobbied powerfully for our government to pursue environmental justice.

FCNL Staff

Report from Bill Sweet, Yearly Meeting representative to FCNL Annual Meeting

Since returning to San Antonio in 2013, South Central Yearly Meeting (SCYM) appointed me to one of the six positions allotted to represent the Yearly Meeting on the General Committee of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). This was not novel for me, as I served in that role for SCYM in the 1990s and for a couple of years for New England Yearly Meeting in the middle “aughts”. I attended in 2016 on my own – with exceptions for personal and personnel matters, FCNL sessions, like those of all Quaker organizations, are open to all.

The meeting started on Wednesday evening, 16 November with lobby training for Thursday’s lobbying under the label “Quaker Public Policy Institute” followed by the plenary “Environmental Justice: Lifting the Burden on People and the Planet”. After Worship Thursday morning, we dispersed to our lobbying appointments. Our assigned

“ask” was H.R.2021 The Environmental Justice for All Act. The Texas delegation’s first appointment was in the Hart Senate Office Building (directly across the street from FCNL) with Sen. Cornyn, meeting with a staffer in the hallway as both of their conference rooms were occupied. This is not an unusual location for meetings in my experience.

We were listened to politely and asked cogent questions. Second was Sen. Cruz, virtually from the hotel, with two staffers. The meeting was quite brief; there was push-back on the “ask.” One member of our delegation thought it quite rude when one staffer left abruptly. Then across Capitol Hill to the Rayburn House Office Building to meet in-person with Rep. Henry Cuellar. Unfortunately, he had to return to TX abruptly for an emergency, so I met with his staffer dealing with the environment. I was accompanied by Giselle Lopez Estrada, FCNL’s Program Assistant for Young Adult Outreach.

I don’t really have a personal story which is a standard part of FCNL’s lobbying roadmap. Instead, from my work as an environmental toxicologist/human health risk assessor, I presented some maps from EPA’s Environmental Justice Tool for the district, TX-28. Both ends, Laredo and San Antonio, were shown. He seemed very interested, listening intently and asking relevant questions. Of course, no promises on the “ask,” support and cosponsor, were given by any office.

The main task of the governing body, the General Committee, some 300 strong, on-site and virtually, was to approve the [Legislative Priorities for the 118th Congress](#) which begins in January. Friends Meeting of San Antonio participated in this process by considering, then submitting, our priorities in the spring. The Policy Committee labored hard over the hundreds of submissions, presenting their draft in the advance materials. Concerns were raised in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and listening sessions that the original draft was wordy, had too many priorities, and mentioned Black, Indigenous, people of color and immigrant communities specifically, failing to include handicapped/disabled people. The draft was revised, and the revised revision was approved in the third Business Meeting, Sunday morning. Thus, staff and non-staff activists across the country have their objectives for the next two years.

Otherwise, the days were filled from 7:00 a.m. (breakfast, usually turning into a sort of working breakfast) to 10:00 p.m. with workshops, lunch with lobbyists on their specialty area, and plenaries, including one introducing the nine Program Assistants (formerly called interns) which I’ve always particularly enjoyed. They are an impressive bunch.

In comparing the FCNL of the 1990s with today’s, I see many more young people and many more non-European-origin folks among both FCNL staff and the General Committee. Women are well-represented but were then too. FCNL staff are more numerous and FCNL as an organization is larger, now comprising the Quaker Welcome Center, adjacent to the FCNL building, and Friends Place on Capitol Hill (the renovated former William Penn House).

Friends General Conference

What it Means to be Quaker



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Ella Frey grew up going to meeting for worship with her family and attending Quaker school. Being Quaker was Ella’s identity, but it didn’t hold personal meaning for her until

she engaged with the wider community of young Friends. There she found a deeper connection to what it means to be a Quaker in the world.

Ella found a deeper sense of community with people her own age at the Gathering. She experienced her first profound meeting. Being Quaker became more than what she was but who she is. [Young Friends in San Antonio can have a similar experience by attending the Yearly Meeting annual session in April. **See page 3 and watch for more details in these pages.**]

American Friends Service Committee

Statement on the Peace Testimony and Ukraine

Quakers are a people who follow after peace, love and unity. Our peace testimony is our witness to the Truth as we experience it

At the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Friends World Committee for Consultation issued a Christian Call for Peace, affirming that invasion and occupation are the opposite of Christ's universal call to reconciliation and unity, and echoing church statements in many countries, including Ukraine, calling for an immediate ceasefire replaced by a peace-making dialogue. This call would echo the Golden Rule (treat others as you would want to be treated), which is a foundational value of all major world religions, has the potential to eliminate violence, and helps us to recognize one another.

Almost by definition, peacemaking often involves engaging with people making war and understanding the reasons they do so. Nevertheless, our vocation as a peace church is to seek and make real the peaceful alternatives to armed conflict, which with God's help, are possible, and to ensure that the long-lasting human costs of war are not forgotten or neglected.

We continue to uphold the right to refuse to kill. We stand with conscientious objectors on all sides of this conflict, with the people in Russia who stand up against their leaders' belligerent actions, and the people in Ukraine employing creative forms of nonviolent civil resistance.

[Find the complete statement at AFSC website]

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**The number of LGBTQ
Candidates in the 2022
mid-term elections.**

Surprise!

Short, Thin Quaker Books: **Hairstyles** of the Rich and Famous Quakers
(2-minute video from a 1996 BBC documentary)

Ethical Pyramid Schemes for Today's Quakers. By U.R. Harming

Tasty **Vegetarian** Dishes by Pendle Hill Kitchen Staff

[Q&A: Do I have to be a vegetarian to be a Quaker?]