
THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

Number 30

A Publication of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends

Eleventh Month 2007

Concluding Minute, Ohio Yearly Meeting 2007

Over the course of the past week, we have had the opportunity to experience the depths of silence before the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Several Friends mentioned they sensed the strong presence of the Holy Spirit among us. We desired through all that Almighty God would be in charge of our sessions. In our answering of the Queries, in our consideration of the future of the Plummer property, and in the hearing of our committee reports, we took time to stop and consider our callings. We asked Christ, who brought us together, to help us hear Him clearly and help us to obey. Our evening speakers guided us on topics of separation from the world, repentance, and the convergent Friends movement. Through it all, the Lord opened avenues of service to individuals as we opened ourselves to be His adherents and His servants. What God sends nourishes the earth, and we trust that we will similarly prosper for Him as we are faithful.

Many of us were touched in worship by the inexhaustible mercy and love of the Father, enabling us to declare with the angels "Holy, Holy, Holy is our God, and worthy to be praised!" We were reminded to preach the message, not dilute the message. We were reminded to proclaim that the kingdom of Christ is at hand. Reality is infinitely more valuable than appearances. Christ Jesus seeks to mold us so that others will recognize His fingerprints on us.

Although we each have an inward relationship with Christ Jesus, we are also part of the fabric of our meetings. We were encouraged to listen to and obey the still, small voice, which alone is sufficient to help us live as the Chief Cornerstone would have us, fit together with the meeting in a strong spiritual building. We were reminded that there are diversities of operations but the same Spirit, dividing to everyone severally as He will. Although it may be easy to see what might be wrong in the nature of others, we were told to realize our own mighty callings in Him and assist in the work of spiritually nurturing our sisters and brothers in Christ. Each of us needs to make time in our busyness for the work the Saviour has placed before us, both corporately

and individually.

The Lord taught us much this week about the topic of repentance and the critical, positive role it plays in the life of Christians. Repentance – the total changing of our mindset – is the source of inward peace with God. Each of us struggles with pride, envy, or other sins. When we allow the Light of Christ to fully examine our hearts; when we become aware of our shortcomings and acknowledge our own weakness; when we recognize things we need to repent of; then we are open to experience the amendment of life that Jesus desires for each of us. Repentance brings us to the Kingdom of God. This inward cross is the power of God which brings about the freedom of release from addiction. Repentance fosters death of the self, so that the life of Christ may be in us. He calls us to mortify, or execute, everything in us that is not in line with His will. As we are regenerated by the inward water, repenting and receiving the life that comes from Christ, we are told that joy springs forth in heaven. Friend, open thyself to repentance, so thou wilt be enabled to come to know the truth more fully. Discover for thyself that the way to the kingdom is within. This is the true, invisible, life-changing substance that Christ Jesus longs to share with every man that cometh into the world.

Friends, stand still in that which is pure. Being in the world is not a choice, but being of it is a choice. Discover the difference. We are not called to emulate the world but to be a part of His workings to change it and to discover the unspeakable joy derived therefrom. Be a true disciple. Walk anew as His people. Abide in His Truth. Proclaim His lordship. Christ Jesus died on the cross and arose so that He might wash away thy sins, remake thee in His spiritual image, and indwell thy spirit. Lay hold on these provisions for thee

We now conclude, purposing to meet again Eighth Month 12th, 2008, if consistent with divine will.

Seth Hinshaw, OYM clerk
(A summary of events and ministry throughout the week.)

Scheduled Meetings for Worship

(For worship at OYM monthly meetings see www.ohioyearlymeeting.org)

Meeting	Location	Contact Person	Contact Information	Meeting Schedule
Athens Christian Friends	Athens, Greece	Themistoklis Papaioannou	papathem@gmail.com; P.O. Box 21121, Athens 11410, Greece	First Days, 5 PM
Crossroads	Flint, Michigan	Phil Helms	248-360-2074; admin@ michiganquakers.org	Weekly/First Days
Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ	Evanston, IL (near Chicago)	Robert Hopper	847-733-7226 ; friendrobert61@sbcglobal.net	Monthly / 2nd Seventh Day
Goshen	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 620688; Book- seeker@blueyonder.co.uk	1st & 3rd First Days
Greenwich	London, England	Simon Watson	simonw@quaker.org.uk	Weekly/ First Days
Peachtree	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; a_lang@bellsouth.net	Call for info
Richland/Ashland Friends	Loudonville, Ohio	Scott Savage	419-368-9419 (leave message)	2nd First Day
Ripley Christian Quakers	Ripley, Derbyshire,UK	Mike Wake- field	UK # 01773-541424 Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk	First Days, 10:30 AM
Salisbury	Salisbury, Maryland	Kye Parsons	410-749-8221 kyeparsons@hotmail.com	First Days, 1:30 PM
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 geoff@gsgilmore.com	3rd Fifth Day

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The editor welcomes articles for publication, those written recently as well as excerpts from earlier Friends' writings. Subscriptions are funded through readers' contributions and an appropriation from OYM.

Prayer

This morning I asked the Lord how I might better serve Him. His response was, "spend as much time with Me as you can." From this opening I learned that prayer is spending time with God. In prayer a person's spirit is best able to connect and communicate with the One Who is The Source - God the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and Lover of our souls..

Prayer is an absolute necessity for each of us Friends and for all of us together to maintain our identity. Friends know from experience that Christ has come to teach His people Himself. Christ's teaching is possible when we students attend class, inwardly, through prayer. We offer ourselves through praise, gratitude, emotions, questions, needs, gifts and more. In return we receive the most precious, priceless gift - Himself.

We are not capable of fully grasping all that that means - that the Source of Life, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, wants to give Himself to us. But that is in fact what is going on in countless lives even now. Scripture has revealed it; many lives have witnessed to it.

How do we pray? There is no guarantee of ease in prayer, or confidence in one's ability to pray rightly. Only by God's grace can we pray at all. We make many imperfect attempts at prayer, but as we continue we learn and are guided in it. There is a depth and a silence in prayer, when it comes from the heart and spirit. There is a living stillness.

Prayer requires time in silence and waiting - not idle, thought-filled waiting, but expectant waiting. It is the waiting of one at home, expecting the return of a beloved family member, who hears the door-

knob turn and has yet to hear the voice or see the face, but who knows they are about to be embraced by their loved one. It is the waiting of a child at heart who sees the flash of lightning and counts the seconds before the rumble of thunder.

Sometimes the wait ends with a clear verbal message, explaining, instructing, calling for action. At other times the wait is replaced with an expectant sense that the next event in one's life will contain a vital message. When we are gathered in prayer with others, the waiting can end when another Friend rises to speak a message that pierces one's soul. Often for me, the wait ends when an unseen Friend enters the room and there is a sense of unity, wholeness, peace, and love.

Such a comparatively small portion of our lives is spent together in meeting for worship or other corporate prayer that most of our time for prayer is on our own in private prayer. Friends ask the Lord for mercies for those who have requested prayer or those for whom Friends are led to intercede. Friends recite and sing psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, scripture passages. Friends praise God out loud for the many gifts bestowed upon us by our Creator. Friends lament the sins we behold within and around us. Friends listen for and respond to leadings. We jot down notes afterward in journals to help us recall these holy encounters. We share some of these encounters with others.

Prayer is not practiced for its effects, yet it is effectual. It restores, guides, strengthens and teaches. A lack of prayer is not always noticed right away. A person may gradually lose touch with the Lord as less prayer is practiced, until something brings him

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In this Issue

This issue draws attention to our inner communication with God. Conscious prayer, whether formed into words or not (Romans 8:26), is the most obvious way we communicate with God. Here we have two articles about prayer and two prayers. In addition, Arthur Berk reminds us of the essential inner

components of outward action, and Jim Eblin notes the sacramental quality of being in the presence of God, while Robert Hopper's book review affirms the importance of communion with the Lord as we read the Scriptures.

The editor

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or her up short. Experienced Friends find that a constant background prayer, maintaining a state of readiness to hear and respond (oh, that there were one verb for both of those) to the Living Christ, is the best way to live. Prayer is inseparable from any of the main activities of daily living in its necessity to our existence and identity.

Prayer can bring us to a precarious condition. It raises awareness of inner darkness and weakness, awareness of the distance between where or who one is and where or who one is called to be. It enhances sensitivity to sin. In this condition, one may be overcome by shame, sadness, anger and despair. Without confidence in the tenderness and unfailing quality of God's love, one may try to rely on self or on worldly understanding to cope with such revelations. Or, unwilling to face this inner storm, one may try to run away, declaring the whole exercise unsatisfactory or even dangerous

It is best to hold on through the churning, battering ocean of inner darkness and temptation, waiting to be delivered by God's power to the other side of the darkness. This other side is where peace, relief, healing, salvation, and the ability to change are found.

In the end, describing the experience of prayer does little if it does not inspire the reader to pray. The only way to know prayer is to pray. This was written with a prayer that God's life may come more fully to those who read it.

Virginia Schurman has written a beautiful tract based on her experiences and observations on prayer. Thomas Kelly wrote of it in many of his essays. Thousands of others have written and spoken of it. Why attempt to write further? As with any important subject, it is one that deserves to be written about and read time and again, to keep it fresh in our minds. Like a nutritious meal, one is not enough to sustain the body!

One brief definition does no justice to the wealth of reality about prayer, so this effort will contain a number of aspects of prayer. Just as the most detailed biography cannot do justice in fully portraying a remarkable person, no single attempt will do justice in portraying all of the value, expressions and force of prayer.

Raye Hodgson

Raye is a member of Short Creek MM (OYM). She and her husband Randolph live in southwestern Connecticut where Raye teaches biology in an urban "magnet" school.

Prayer in the Life of Ohio Yearly Meeting

"Lord, open my lips, and my heart, and my will, and my mind, that my mouth, my whole being, my whole behavior, my whole attitude may declare your praise and serve your kingdom, in the name and life and power of the living Jesus Christ, our Lord now, today and forever. Amen."

William Taber's personal adaptation of a monastic devotion introduced Richard Simon's and my talk on prayer at the QuakerCamp gathering held last Sixth Month in Barnesville, Ohio. Before we spoke, Fran Taber offered a framework from Barclay's *Apology*: "Since we can do nothing without Christ, we cannot pray without the concurrence and assistance of his Spirit. In order to state the reason for

this difference more clearly, let us first consider the two-fold nature of prayer – its inward and outward aspects. Inward prayer is the secret turning of the mind toward God, where it looks up to him and constantly breathes some of its secret hopes and aspirations toward him ...Outward prayer is something which arises when the necessary strength and permission for it are granted by the motion and influence of the Spirit over and above that which is required for inward retirement." [Proposition XI, *Outward Prayer*, D. Freiday, ed., 1967, pg 287]

Prayer is central to community life in OYM. In addition to frequent scheduled prayer, people some-

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times just start praying when there is an apparent need or a new reason to be thankful. In meeting for worship someone may pray aloud on their knees. During yearly meeting several members gather on the meetinghouse porch early each morning to pray for the clerk and the business, and the daily schedule includes a time for each day's prayer needs to be heard and addressed. At a recent yearly meeting, one individual asked for healing prayer. Ten or twelve Friends gathered for prayers, laying on hands, and anointing with oil. The power of this experience inspired four others to ask in turn for prayer. That whole experience was unplanned.

Prayer is about living and growing into God's will. Prayer is an exercise of the heart and soul, not primarily of the mind. It is a continuous, ongoing conversion of the heart. Richard named several types of prayer: silent, vocal, praise, thanksgiving, contemplative, "gimme" prayers, prayers for deliverance or spiritual change, and praying scripture.

We do not know how to pray, except by the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26). There is no formula or recipe for prayer; the process cannot be well conveyed in an intellectual presentation. In fact, prayer can depend on putting aside thinking, which is not something that I can do from my own effort. God helps me to stop thinking. God comes to meet me, leads me into prayer, guides me along and helps me find words or feel a prayer without words.

Although God must guide our prayer, there are some ways to get ready for that guidance. The first is to show up, to be present and to pay attention. A daily discipline is good, as is solitude. It is also good to be humbly aware of being in the Presence of God. That heightened awareness and humility seem to be the condition where prayer begins, a point of surrender to the power of God. What else helps? Bible reading helps in getting started. Kneeling helps, heightening humility and focusing awareness on God. It is good to address God directly, reminding us to Whom we pray. It helps to be part of a community that prays, even a small

community or family.

What should a person pray about? Their situation may influence their prayer. Some Friends pause to pray before "everything" - before meals, before travel, before work. In a discipline of daily prayer, focus on that day. Longer term goals can always fit in, such as one day's progress toward a longer term goal. Focus on praise. Everything comes from God. Feel the awe. Focus on thanksgiving and gratitude. Thanksgiving acknowledges an ongoing relationship. Focus on thy sins and temptation, even asking God to show thee sins and temptations of which thee is not fully aware. Confession is good. Asking for forgiveness is good. Ask for healing. In the Bible every person who asked Jesus for healing actually was healed

Praying in the name of Jesus has power for me. I remember His promise: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ... Ask and you shall receive." (John 16:23; Matthew 7:7-11) When I pray in the name of Jesus, with awe and reverence, I can ask only for something that is fitting to be associated with the name of Jesus: peace, love, truth, integrity, healing, wholeness, illumination, wisdom ...

It is good to focus on *God's* plan. I know what I want before I pray. What does God want? Prayer doesn't change God to do what I want. Prayer changes me to conform better to what God wants - sometimes a tiny change and sometimes a big change. The change is always about moving closer to living in God's will, not in my own will. Prayer is about doing something different. If I don't notice any change at all, it seems probable that I have not really prayed yet.

After our presentation, the people in attendance were asked to share their personal prayer experiences. The resulting discussion was deep, uplifting, and a testimony to the importance of prayer in Friends' lives.

John Benson

John is a member of Stillwater MM (OYM) and lives with his wife Carmelita in Barnesville, Ohio.

On The Beatitudes

When Jesus gave what we now call “The Beatitudes” in His Sermon on the Mount, He said that God blesses the poor in spirit, as well as those who mourn, who are merciful, and who are peacemakers. Jesus understood the Father’s blessings. He knew that God does not bless everyone who is economically poor, even though our heavenly Father sympathizes with deprived people. Rather, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” challenges us to recognize our own spiritual poverty, to know that we are in desperate need of God’s riches. We all need to wait on God for Christ’s peace, Christ’s prophetic enlightenment, Jesus’ caring, and above all, for the Lord’s love. In our waiting, we are required to be patient, for the Lord knows when to send blessings into our hearts. We need to empty ourselves of our various notions and wait for God’s Light to penetrate our craving souls.

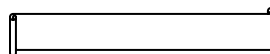
Another misconception surrounds the Beatitude concerning peacemakers. We sometimes erroneously believe that it centers on the resolution of political conflict, rather than on the love and power of Christ in our lives. If we claim to be children of God, we should strive to open ourselves, in His Spirit, to the peacefulness that He provides us in obedience. In that state we will acknowledge that

Jesus expects us to forgive our opponents to such an extent that we can begin to love our adversaries, even those who have not embraced our gracious Lord. Once we have this wonderful blessing as an inward experience, we will be able to act as true peacemakers, surrounded by the armament of God. When we speak of the peace testimony, we will proclaim that God has removed our inner conflicts and has replaced them with His forgiving, embracing love. This love will overcome our desire to act violently. May we preach this message of peace in Christ Jesus.

Being blessed by God does not mean that Satan will not attempt to persecute us “for righteousness’ sake.” But if we remain faithful even though we are maligned, the Lord will send us His heavenly blessings inwardly. Remember that the prophets, the disciples, and many Friends before us were persecuted for abiding in faith, yet they felt the clarity of Christ in their suffering for righteousness’ sake. Today we are called to preach the necessity of opening ourselves to the Lord’s blessings. Then we will be a community in the Lord.

Arthur Berk

Arthur is an affiliate member of Rockingham MM (OYM).
He lives in New York City.



A Prayer from the Old Testament

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Review: "George Fox and the Book of Revelation"

In my experience, no other book of the Bible is as misunderstood, misused, and avoided as the book of Revelation. I recall my own misguided thinking about this text, thinking shaped by children's Bible study and preaching both in the Baptist churches I attended with my aunt in central Illinois and the United Church of Christ I attended with my mother near Chicago. In the former, Revelation was seen as conveying a prophesy about a distant future, unrealizable in the present age, and preached upon with a heavy dose of gloom and doom as incentive to get right with the Lord. In the latter, it was an example of apocalyptic literature, written for bygone people in an ancient day. The book of Revelation was seen as having, at best, only symbolic meaning for us today, or, at worst, as having no value in our enlightened age and time except as an academic study.

As a young adult in Colorado, I overheard many street corner preachers using the images in the book of Revelation to scare their listeners. Sadly, today we have a world filled with "end-times" theologies, in which this wonderful book of the Bible is used to frighten and enslave, or in the service of a particular geopolitical ideology. The popular media, which thrive on sensationalism, promote these misguided views of the book of Revelation.

Many Christians, of various stripes and including myself before my conviction, have been misled about the meaning and place in our faith of the book of Revelation. Many Christians avoid reading Reve-

lation, thereby denying themselves a precious volume that, as George Fox pointed out, was written for us. I can recall how radically different and refreshing, when I first read them, were Fox's openings on this book as recorded in his journal.

When I read Fox's journal for the first time, prior to my conviction, it occurred to me that Fox's openings on the book of Revelation indicated that his thinking was far ahead of others of his time. After my conviction, though, it became clear through my own experience that Fox's openings had nothing to do with his being ahead of his time, and everything to do with his being in the Spirit which gave forth the Scriptures. It is only by being in the same Spirit that gave them forth that one may rightly understand them.

Arthur Berk has recently written a small booklet entitled "George Fox & the Book of Revelation." It has an introduction by Daniel Berrigan and is published by the New Foundation Fellowship. Arthur's work is a succinct guide for reflection and study of Revelation. It pulls together Fox's writings on the text and the text of Revelation itself. I highly recommend this small but essential work both to Friends and to others who seek to be turned "from darkness to the marvelous Light of Christ."

Robert Hopper

Robert has been instrumental in the recent revival of Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ, a group that meets regularly for worship and fellowship near Chicago. (see listing on page 2)

Friends and Sacraments

It is a common misunderstanding (even, unfortunately, among Friends) that Quakers don't have any sacraments. In my experience, that is not true. The "elements" used by many religious groups, usually bread in some form and the fruit of the vine in some form, do not go to the heart of what transpires in the sacrament of communion with God. A Quaker meeting for worship, even a completely silent one, is, when properly utilized, a sacramental occasion, without any physical elements. That is not to say that it is without *any* elements, however. When the

Lord manifests His Presence, and His Power is over all, when we open to Him and receive Him that He may be formed up within us, then do we truly and fully partake of Him, in this Supper of Silence. Truly, "we are what we eat," and when we comprehend the Lord and spiritually ingest Him, then do we understand what He meant when He spoke of Himself as the true bread, the bread of life, as set forth in the sixth chapter of John's gospel.

James Eblin

Jim, who has attended OYM's last two annual sessions, lives in Corvallis, Oregon, with his wife, Jane.

The Conservative Friend #30
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A Prayer for My Heart

Thank you, Lord, for my heart. It has served me without resting...for all my years. Moment by moment and day after day my heart has pumped blood to every limb and organ of my body, supplying the nutrients that give life and energy while cleansing my tissues of the harmful residue of their daily work. In all those years it has needed no maintenance or spare parts, no special fuel or lubrication. It has surged with power when I needed help for high exertion. It has quietly sustained me during sleep.

Grant me, O God, the grace...not to eat so much that I accumulate unnecessary fat, increasing the work required of my heart to keep me alive and fresh enough to climb the mountains of high endeavor and the stairs of every day. Help me avoid the seduction of rich foods that narrow my arteries until my muscles cry for lack of blood. Neither let me neglect to maintain my strength, by lazily relying on cars and machines when I could as readily use my legs and arms.

Save me, Lord, from ambition that gives high place to wealth and power and prestige, that builds stress into my waking hours and robs me of restful sleep at night. Teach me to forgive when anger builds up, to seek forgiveness when I'm oppressed by guilt, and to bear the fruit of love and peace. Then shall my heart beat with the rhythm of contentment, and my whole body will know harmony and quiet joy.

When in the fullness of time the beat of my heart must falter and fail, give me this grace, dear Lord: that my response shall not be petulance that my heart does not last forever, but gratitude that it has served me long and well.

Taken from *In the Likeness of God* by Philip Yancey and Paul Brand.
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