
THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

Number 35

A Publication of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends

Second Month, 2009

Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace

As Conservative Friends we know one definition of an "opportunity" to be a time - a window - wherein or through which individuals may give or receive the direct inspiration or revelation of God. The seed for Peace Gathering 2009 was planted nearly two years ago with the simple question, "Why can't we bring together all the churches and bring an end to war?"

There was no knowledge then that the people of the United States would elect their first president of African and American descent. There was no knowledge then that our world economy would be at record lows. However, there was knowledge that the United States government is complicit in many wars around the world.

Inspired by Romans 12:21, *Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good...*, a small group representing the historic peace churches - Church of the Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers - undaunted by the huge task, put together a program that was held 1/13-17/2009 entitled "Heeding God's Call — A Gathering on Peace: Inspiring Hope, Raising Voices, Taking Action." Attendance was not the 600 hoped for, but nearly 400 people came to address peace and justice issues in our lives. There were representatives from the broad diversity of Quakers, Mennonites, the Church of the Brethren, and at least 20 other Christian traditions, as well as Muslim and Jewish observer/participants.

Opening remarks rephrased the song, "This is the day that the Lord has made..." to tell us "This is the year that the Lord has granted..." and quoted Luke 23:18-19, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of the sight for the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* We have this year, a window of optimum opportunity, to witness to one another, to make our voices heard, and to work together towards the changes envisioned by our new president,

to "overcome evil with good."

I cannot accurately condense five days filled with dynamic speakers (20 total, including members of two panels) who witnessed to their experiences and inspired us to change. Our schedules were tightly planned, leading several persons to say to me, "I questioned coming to this gathering because it was so "programmed." On the other end of the spectrum, a participant asked me, "Why do Friends invite us into their place of worship expecting us to conform to their practices?" For me, there was balance of integrity and sensitivity to the movement of the Holy Spirit in both the unprogrammed moments and the programmed agenda.

Our experiences included listening to inspired speakers in plenary sessions, sharing our concerns and experiences in small anchor groups, formulating answers to discussion questions in focus groups, and gaining specific information in workshops. Worship was the basis for all our activity, worship in singing as well as in programmed and unprogrammed times together. Each day our attention was directed to certain scriptures on a particular theme: Micah 6:6-8 and Luke 4:14-21 (Introduction); Isaiah 65:25, Matthew 5:38-44 and Luke 17:20-21 (on Inspiring Hope); Luke 24:13-25 (on Raising Voices); and Isaiah 43:19, Romans 12:1-2, 9-21 and Matthew 25:34-40 (on Taking Action).

On the final day we were invited to participate in the power of faith in action by attending one of nine different partner faith churches, tabernacles or synagogues, each supported by four or more other local faith communities. At each place we held worship and then had discussions on a broad range of topics, followed by a box lunch together. We then left our places of worship to join in the power of faith in action. A demonstration permit had been arranged allowing us to walk a few blocks in a large, orderly group to a local gun store where there is an ongoing effort to have the owner voluntarily sign each item

(Continued on page 3)

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	Weekly First Days, 5:00 PM
Chatahoochee Friends Worship Group	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; a_lang@bellsouth.net	Weekly First Days, 10:00 AM
Crossroads Friends Worship Group	Flint, Michigan; also Shelbyville, MI	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	Twice a month / 2nd and 4th Seventh Days
Goshen Meeting	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 620688; Book- seeker@blueyonder.co.uk	Twice a month / 1st & 3rd First Days
Greenwich Friends	London, England	Simon Watson	simonw@quaker.org.uk	Weekly / First Days
North Main Friends Worship Group	Greenville, South Carolina	Don Shabkie	dshabkie@bellsouth.net	Weekly First Days, 2:00 PM
Richland/Ashland Friends	Loudonville, Ohio	Scott Savage	419-368-9419 (leave message)	Monthly / 2nd First Day
Ripley Christian Quakers	Ripley, Derbyshire,UK	Mike Wake- field	UK # 01773-541424 Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk	Weekly First Days, 10:30 AM
Salisbury Friends Worship Group	Salisbury, Maryland	Kye Parsons	410-749-8221 kyeparsons@hotmail.com	Weekly First Days, 1:30 PM
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 geoff@gsgilmore.com	Monthly / 3rd Fifth Day

Financial Contributions Appreciated

The Conservative Friend is financed through contributions from readers, with help from OYM. Small donations for *TCF*, as well as larger ones, are gratefully accepted. Please make checks (postal orders for donations outside US) to “The Conservative

Friend” and send them to Elvina Krekler (address below). The value of a subscription is \$10/year. Any excess over \$10 that a person contributes for a given year’s subscription is probably tax deductible, because *TCF* is a publication of Ohio YM.

The Conservative Friend is published four times a year under the care of the Wider Fellowship of Conservative Friends Committee of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, Barnesville, Ohio 43713. For more information about OYM, visit www.ohioyearlymeeting.org.

Editor - Susan Smith, 3876 Hopkins Gap Rd, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

email preferred: tufiyaat@aol.com

Treasurer - Elvina Krekler, 1187 State Hwy 250, Adena, OH 43901

WFCC Committee Convener - Nancy Hawkins, 5190 Kirk Rd, Columbiana, OH 44408

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.

(Continued from page 1)

of the "Code of Conduct" to stop illegal arms sale. Presently he has signed all but Code #2, which calls for participating gun retailers to support a computerized system that will electronically flag a customer with a prior trace to a gun used in a crime.

A message given one day out of worshipful silence. summarizes, in large part, what the Lord would have result from this gathering. It was (although not verbatim): My children, you have each taken a path, sincerely believing that I, your Lord, have sent you. I want you to know there are many paths and I allow you many choices along each path. Please know that I need each one of you. I created you differently and I need each one of you, for the fields to harvest are many, and the work before you is great. Today I want you to know that the path you take and the choices you make along that path are yours. I ask of you to humble yourselves. Take responsibility for your decisions, but above all, take me along with you. Humble yourselves and accept my wis-

dom, for only as you welcome me to walk your path with you - only then am I able to work through you and bless you. Recognize the well of living water that never runs dry. Recognize my gift of love that is freely given and always available. I ask of you, I beg of you, humble yourselves and invite me into your work. Only then am I able to bring peace to our troubled times.

I felt the entire gathering experience to be rather like the birthing of a baby. We were given something very precious to take home with us. We were charged with the responsibility to assimilate into our beings, and to translate both to our religious traditions and to the traditions within our communities more effective ways to witness to peace and to nurture peace effectively. We were directed to take our Lord with us into the fields of harvest.

Martha Giffen

Martha is a member of Stillwater MM who lives in Barnesville, OH. She is a recorded minister of the yearly meeting and was named to represent OYM at the Peace Gathering.

We are a people that follow after those things
that make for peace, love and unity.
It is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same.
We do deny and bear our testimony
against all strife and wars and contention.

Margaret Fell, 1660

Friends, that which is set up by the sword is held up by the sword. That which is set up by spiritual weapons is held up by spiritual weapons, and not by carnal weapons.

The peacemaker has the kingdom and is in it, and has dominion over the peace-breaker, to calm him in the power of God.

The days of virtue, love and peace are come and coming, and the Lamb had and has the kings of the earth to war withal and to fight...[He] will overcome with the Sword of the Spirit, the word of His mouth, for the Lamb shall have the victory...

George Fox, 1652

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness,
and bearing with each other and forgiving one another
and laying not accusations one against another
but praying for each other
and helping each other up with a tender hand....

Isaac Pennington, 1667

The Power of the Word

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

Throughout the New Testament, in the original Greek, one term is used for "word" or "words" (meaning also message, declaration, or saying) and also for the appellative "Word", which is applied to Jesus Christ. That term is "Logos", in its various grammatical forms. Only occasionally, as in John 3:34 or 6:63, "words", in a non-appellative sense, is rendered as "reemata." In the resounding opening of John's Gospel, the "Word" is "Logos": *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)*

Biblical scholars have recently suggested that, contrary to what was previously supposed, John's Gospel may be the earliest Christian writing contained in the Bible. John 21:24 claims, at least, that the book is no more than second hand, passed on by someone who was actually there with Jesus. To me something seems right about assuming a very early date for John's Gospel (*I have always felt that way about it*), as John's opening words take us right back to another beginning, the beginning of Genesis, and say in effect, "The Word was right there!"

And indeed, in Genesis 1, it has always struck me that God brings things into being not by a wave of the hand, nor by some other action, but by saying. God says let something be, and that something is. In a recent series of study sessions on John's Gospel, at Schuylkill Meeting, Pennsylvania, Nancy Rosenberger offered the following precis of a point made in Joseph Pickvance's "George Fox on the Light of God Within": "The Word possesses creative power... the Word means the eternal, creative power of the living God."

But if we look a little deeper into the beginning of John's Gospel, we find something else interesting. In the Greek original, the word "made", which appears three times in verse 3, is not from the verb "ktizo" (to create), but from "ginomai". This latter word, which appears more than seven hundred times in the New Testament, never appears with the meaning of "to create", but rather it means "to be, to come, to become, to come to pass", also "to be done" or "to be transacted".

Far from lessening the strength of John's declaration, re-drafting the Authorised Version words with "done" instead of "made" - a more accurate translation of the Greek - reinforces that strength; thus: *All things were done by Him; and without Him was not anything done that was done.*

I have always felt rightly guided in saying that the Word is God's "executive" power, a term which I have used patiently, whilst wondering whether it had the magnetism, the intellectual force, sufficient to catch the attention of the unconvinced, in the way that "creative" does. But it is indeed a just word to use: "the Word" means the eternal, executive power of the living God - the power to do anything; to create, yes, or to destroy or to sustain; to speak or to remain silent; to open or to close; to save or to condemn; to give or to withhold or to take away; to judge and to be merciful; in the smallest as in the greatest, and in the greatest as in the smallest.

It is awesome to be part of the Church of which this Word is the Head. It is awesome to be drawn together in His name, and know Him in our midst. It is awesome in the extreme to be commanded to speak as His oracle! *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart. (Romans 10:8)*

Paul Thompson

Paul is an affiliate member of Rockingham Monthly Meeting (Ohio YM). Paul lives with his wife Stephanie and their daughter Ruth in Perth, Scotland.

*...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,
and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;
that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven....*

Matthew 5: 44-45

Quaker Process

“At this weekend gathering we are going to follow Quaker process, so that every participant has a chance to be heard.” - - - “I wish you could teach us how to use Quaker process in our condominium meetings.” - - - We who move among unprogrammed Friends hear a lot about Quaker process, usually in terms suggesting that following Quaker process is the best way to avoid problems. What is Quaker process? Should it be our goal?

When Friends speak of “Quaker process,” they are often referring to a procedure in which each interested person states his or her understanding of the topic being considered, while everyone else listens without intruding. Often Friends expect that as different perspectives are aired, a common understanding will gradually form, thus bringing the participants into unity while avoiding both coercion and capitulation. The common ground thus achieved will be owned by everyone and may represent a conclusion that no one had originally anticipated.

That description of Quaker process includes no reference to any divine work. Quaker process practiced in that way is a secular procedure that does not require the participants to have a common faith in God. Consensus, of course, is practiced by many people in a variety of settings. Both consensus and Quaker process present the advantage of leaving participants feeling satisfied; in addition, Quaker process often opens an unexpected solution. However, consensus building, like today’s common form of Quaker process, requires no unity of faith.

When the participants focus on no more than a non-critical sharing of different perspectives, the process is devoid of the basic assumption that initially gave rise to Friends’ way of doing business. As Wilmer Cooper describes those early times, Friends “set out to establish what [Fox] called a Gospel Order, where ‘Christ is present in the midst of his people as ruler, governor and orderer.’ Fox’s expectation was that as members of the body sought the Light of Christ together they would be brought into a common sense of unity.” (*A Living Faith*, p. 83)

The basis for Friends’ unity was their faith in and

faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Their basic assumption when conducting business was that God would lead into unity those who truly submitted themselves to God’s will. They wanted Jesus Christ to lead and govern them. Friends believed that people who seek and follow God’s will for a given situation are automatically brought into unity with each other, because God does not offer contradictory instructions for the same situation.

An assumption of God’s consistency may also lie behind the Quaker practice of “standing aside” when one finds oneself disagreeing with the meeting’s conclusion. Sometimes Quaker process is incorrectly interpreted as meaning that unanimity is required before a decision can be made. Even though Friends know that no vote is to be taken, they sometimes assume that any corporate action must wait until all members have somehow signified their approval. That implicit voting is a faulty derivative of the principle that God will lead all Friends present into unity, as they are faithful in hearing and obeying God. In standing aside from the meeting’s decision, a Friend may be accepting the meeting’s general unity as a sign that the body has been rightly led, or that Friend may be yielding to the meeting’s decision in spite of his or her continuing different conviction.

When the basis of shared faith in Jesus Christ is missing, then also missing are the power and guidance through which Friends have found their way to decisions grounded in Truth. If we Friends today expect to make true decisions, the process of listening to each other must not itself be our goal, nor can care in listening to each other be the yardstick by which we measure the success of our business meetings. Neither is full participation by each member a valid way of gauging whether a topic has been rightly addressed. We need instead to measure the success of our corporate processes by the degree to which we are willing to listen and yield together to Jesus Christ speaking to us all. That is true Quaker process which, ironically, may be done by any gathered people willing to hear and obey our Lord.

Susan Smith

Susan is a member and elder of Rockingham MM (Ohio YM).

A Quaker Primer

Philosophers and social advocates have sometimes asserted that educating people will enable them to choose right over wrong. However, there are millions of folk with little education but very sound morals. In fact, you don't have to be clever, or learned, to possess a genuine knowledge of goodness and personal faith. Also, there are clever and highly-educated people of very dubious morals and no personal faith. If simple good people do not derive their knowledge of goodness and personal faith from being clever or being educated, then how do they come by it?

Starting early in the Old Testament, scripture offers an answer to this question. God **has** made a kind of special creation in our case. The anguished prayer of Moses **was** answered - God **has** put His Spirit upon all his peoples 11:11-17 and 24-29). Jeremiah's New Covenant **is** a fact - we **can** all know God (Jeremiah 31:33-34). Joel's prophecy has been **fulfilled** - God **has** poured out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). The true Light **lighteth** every one of us (John 1:9). If we open that door, He **will** come in (Revelation 3:20) and speak with us now.

George Fox, late in the 17th Century, experienced God speaking to him. Subsequently Fox travelled the English countryside, urging others to know the voice and power of God within them. The people thus gathered came to be known as The Religious Society of Friends or, in derision at their response to God's power, Quakers.

To build some understanding of Quaker ways, and to indicate some of the insights which Quakers have gained by attending to the Inner Light, I will begin by quoting a question and answer from the Anglican Catechism, which I learned as a child. *Question: What meanest thou by this word sacrament? Answer: I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.* These two words from that catechism, *outward* and *inward*, are found over and over again in Quaker writings. Now our Anglican friends recognize two sacraments, and our Roman Catholic friends, seven, but Friends hold that every part of life, and every act we perform, can be

sacramental. Dedication of **every** part of life to God's purposes is the secret formula which transforms base human activity into the realm of the divine. Quakers have always insisted, perhaps with more emphasis than other Christians, that there can be no distinction between everyday life and religious life; that there are not seven sacraments, but seventy times seven.

This conviction led the early Quakers into certain observances for which they were often ridiculed and sometimes punished by law. Some of them seem quaint to us now, but they sprang from, and may serve to illustrate, that conviction, which modern Quakers still cherish.

Early Friends keenly felt the omnipresence of God, so to them it was nonsense to regard a church building, which they called a steeplehouse, as any more a house of God than their own houses, or the open countryside. The law said that they must go to church, but they refused, and suffered for it.

Friends keenly felt the eternal nature of truth, as when Jesus said, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay," so it was nonsense for them to go into a court and swear to tell the truth. Apart from the fact that Christ taught that we should "swear not at all," for a Quaker to stand up one day in one place and declare that he was now going to tell the truth was to allow that on other days and in other places he might feel free to tell lies. The law said that they must swear, but they refused, and suffered for it. This also barred them from the Universities and other places where an oath of allegiance was required.

They keenly felt the absolute nature of the two commandments - "Thou shalt not kill" and "Love your enemies." They made this famous declaration to Charles the Second in 1661: *We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not*

(Continued on page 7)

changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world. The law said that they must fight, but they refused and suffered for it.

I could tell you much more, about the naming of days and months, simplicity of living, the wearing of hats, and the use of *thee* and *thou*, but I expect that you have by now realized that I have put the cart before the horse. How did the early Quakers come by these fundamental convictions? Whence had they these spiritual insights, and whence derived the spiritual power to hold fast to them and to proclaim them, and to endure the persecution resulting from this obstinate conduct?

Early Friends joyfully received and put absolute faith in the great promise Jesus made: I will send you the Holy Spirit, who will lead you into all truth. (see John 16:7 and 13) They accepted the Bible totally, but they believed that the Bible is not the end of revelation. They lived in the belief that Christ had inaugurated that great age foretold by Jeremiah: *After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me....* (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

Quakers therefore meet in a plain room, with no pictures nor stained glass nor statuary, no human priest, no form of service, no ceremony, no set prayers, trying thus to exclude everything which it is practicable to exclude which might impede their receptivity to the pure leadings of the Spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus *The wind bloweth where it listeth.... so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:8) Quakers avoid calendars of readings and of seasons, because they do not wish to put restraints upon the Spirit, but to leave Him to blow where he lists.

The Meeting for Worship is based upon silence, during which Friends experience what we have come to call *centering down*, when gradually everyone present tries to achieve detachment from all that is outward, and waits in faith and eager anticipation to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. As the centering-down deepens, the Meeting often begins to be aware of a strangely vibrant and expectant unity, a sense of being indeed in the presence of God, and Friends have come to refer to this as being *gathered*. Perhaps then a Friend will be moved to rise and speak, seeking to be obedient and faithful to the Spirit. It is not unusual for Friends to feel themselves trembling as they speak. A Friend may also read from the Bible or from any other inspired writing, or give voice to prayer. When the appointed time arrives, elders shake hands to signify that the Meeting for Worship is at an end, and this is the only act resembling ceremony that you will witness in a Quaker Meeting

In their silent Meetings Quakers found that the great promise was indeed true, and that ordinary folk could listen directly to the Holy Spirit, and that nothing which was outward mattered at all. They felt that they were opening their hearts to the Lord Jesus, and finding the promise in the Book of Revelation fulfilled. They felt that, having indeed supped with the Lord Jesus, laying hold of the inward reality of this sacrament, they had no need of the outward and visible signs of bread and wine. In any case, they sought to make every simple act of eating and drinking sacramental, by remembering Him at every meal, not only in the matter of giving thanks, but in the awareness of partaking of Him.

Let me conclude with the first three sentences from our Advices of 1791: *Take heed, dear friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God. Resist not His strivings within you. It is His light that shows us our darkness, and leads to true repentance.*

Ralph Hill

Ralph is an affiliate member of Rockingham Monthly Meeting (Ohio YM). Ralph and his wife Daphne live in Bexhill East Sussex, England.

Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21

The Conservative Friend #35
c/o Susan Smith
3876 Hopkins Gap Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Return Service Requested

One Step from War to Peace

In the morning NPR reports
Lebanon is being bombed
Baghdad has sectarian violence
and Afghanistan's children are starving,
but doesn't explain why.

At lunch time the temp is 102 and
NPR doesn't mention our Cooling Station
where for the last three days
we sent volunteers to old folk's houses
and delivered bottled water
and made sure air conditioners were on.
I drove them if needed in my old truck
to sit in our cool facility.
We ran errands for them
in our hot cars
nearly burning our hands
on our door handles.

I eat my dinner with the radio and
NPR does not tell me
I will meet my new neighbors
in the hallway in an hour
the father speaks a little English

the rest of the family, none
and as the Mother looks up at me
from her black hejab, perspiring,
I remember my reflection earlier today
drenched with sweat, grasping
the handle of my truck.
I reach for her offered hand
and smile, unable to tell her "thank you"
for reminding me I am one of billions.

In the morning before leaving for work I leave two
boxes with dishes and pans and non-pork foods and
dried fruits at my new neighbors' door, and I tell
myself the war on the radio isn't allowed on my
doorstep. I feel a sense of Peace as I reach for the
handle of my truck, cool after the long dark night.

When I reach the main road
I turn off NPR
and instead, begin to sing.

Valerie Hibbard

Valerie is a member of Stillwater MM (Ohio YM who worships
with Crossroads Friends. She and her husband Craig are renovating
and apartment in Mt. Clemens, MI.