

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

June 2011

Following Friends' Ways

When we become Friends by applying for membership in our meeting and having our application found clear and approved, we explicitly affirm Friends' mode of worship and Friends' basic testimonies, to that of God in every person, to peace, truth, and simplicity, even when each of us may understand these differently but with the core of loving concern. We learn to value Quaker history, from the early oppression through the "quiet" period and the theological divisions, from which we can learn, perhaps, greater wisdom, with the constant affirmation throughout of the testimonies, seen in the service to peace in wartime and out, against slavery and oppression, for equality and justice for all, and for service to others in direst need. Looking to Quaker heroes inspires us.

Yet these Quaker values are not peculiarly Quaker. Nor do all Quakers, then or now, perfectly exemplify them. They derive from the life and teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, the Christian obligation to channel God's love to others. Why then should we model ourselves on heroic Quakers rather than on Christians?

Quakerism, as we understand it, is an amalgam of different qualities into a coherent whole. After the early turbulence we find a tenderness toward others of different religions, an unwillingness to press our beliefs on others, and rather to learn from them. Our meetings for worship are open to ministry from all. There is a rejection of required doctrine, an emphasis on personal spiritual experience, and an insistence on the spiritual equality and freedom of all to seek in their own way, regardless of sex, race, or creed. There is an undogmatic forthrightness, a deep connection to a loving spirit which rejects war and violence and strives to reach out to the powerless with hope. This is without promise of salvation, either for the Friend or the destitute; it is for love's sake. There is no drive to convert others, but a hope that others will join in the worship and the work.

Each sect has its distinctiveness. We can find each of these qualities in members of other sects and religions. But ours has, for us, an importance in the combination of qualities, with examples for us to follow. We have different central emphases and practices from other Christian churches. Yet we do not all exemplify the cardinal Quaker principles of which we speak; we read and speak of them to remind ourselves of the examples we should follow.



Personal News

From Pam H: "We had spent the day on Friday touring Washington University at St. Louis and Robin absolutely loved everything about the school. At the airport that evening our conversation was all about whether it should be her final college choice. I noticed that skies were getting very dark, and had begun to worry that our flight wouldn't get out in time, when they called for us to board. The pilot urged everyone to get seated quickly so we could get out ahead of the approaching storm, but the runways were closed before we could pull away from the gate. We waited on the plane for about 30 minutes when suddenly the plane began rocking violently and was pelted with debris.

The lightning flashed and everyone realized that we were looking at a tornado. The airplane beside us started to spin around when the pilot shouted for everyone to leave their belongings and de-plane. There was a brief panic in the retractable loading dock as we were all crowded together in the pitch dark and realized we were locked out of the terminal. We felt extremely vulnerable. Someone opened the door and we all spilled out into the utter devastation of the terminal. There were gaping holes in the ceiling, water was pouring in and metal seats and furniture were strewn about on a carpet of shattered glass and insulation.

We all rushed into bathrooms and stairwells and tried to make sense of the conflicting instructions to stay down, or run for safer areas. We eventually made our way to baggage claim which was the least damaged area of the terminal. Outside, the driveways were littered with tossed cars and shuttle buses and no one could get in or out. Miraculously the injuries were minor, mostly cuts from flying debris. Robin and I were not injured at all.

Several hours passed as people with walkie-talkies shouted useless and conflicting information. Everyone was sharing cell phones as we tried to get in touch with relatives and make arrangements. We ran into several other families who had been touring the school that day and the adrenaline-fueled kids instantly bonded. Several hours later a policeman piled a group of us into an SUV and took us to a hotel. No one had luggage but we were all able to shower and sleep for a few hours. The adults stayed up late strategizing about how to get out of town since the airport was closed. We ended up sharing a rental car with a Vietnamese father and daughter and a Jewish boy from Manhattan who had been traveling by himself. The kids became fast friends and the 12 hour drive to Dallas was surprisingly enjoyable - except when we drove past a small town in Oklahoma that had been completely leveled by a tornado just a day or two earlier. It was very sobering. We all went our separate ways in Dallas and Robin and I flew home late Saturday night.

I realize now that we were spared the brunt of the storm as the tornado skipped over our plane to hit the terminal. We are truly blessed that we escaped with nothing more than a sense of the fragility of life and the knowledge that enormous changes can happen in an instant.

Robin is bereft without her cell phone and I have had to explain to her that friends can actually be contacted by landline. We'll get it all sorted out soon.."

We're happy you were unhurt, Pam and Robin. And now we hear that Robin has decided to attend Washington University in St. Louis in the Fall, where she will major in Biology.

We asked you for helpful advice for Tom Rein when he was trying to help a young Somali Bantu refugee who had been bitten severely by a dog. Lee was able to be very helpful with advice for refugees but dogbites are certainly not her area. William S actually knew of an attorney active with this specialization. This is Tom's reaction:

"I just had a wonderful conversation with Joe Villareal. You are right, 'He wrote the book on dog bite cases'. (Literally helped author laws in the city and state.) He hasn't really practiced in that area for 10 or 15 years. He was very helpful in helping me understand how it is doubtful that any lawyer would take the case due to the complexity and expense of dealing with these types of cases. He did give me a contact at the 'pro bono' section of the San Antonio Bar Association. He

also is researching whether the state's 'victim assistance fund' might be an appropriate resource.

Frankly, Joe's empathy, knowledge, and willingness to listen made me a little giddy----typically I get cold responses---or more typically none at all."

Thankyou, Lee and William.

Barbara Miles, in Florida, says, "I do enjoy getting news from you about the Meeting. Im doing well in retirement. Remodeling my bathroom this month. My family are doing OK- granddaughter has moved from the Keys, new job ,new apartment. Her little boy is 8 yrs old and little girl is 3yrs old. My daughter is getting into the VA health system for some much needed care and my son-in-law is going to go to sea! He has a job on a research vessel the Tiburon. Give my best to all of the Friends ."

Thomas and William O enjoyed Yearly Meeting – Thomas is now clerk of Junior Young Friends.

You will remember that Deborah and David, in New Braunfels were in great trouble with their Home Owners Association. We just got this message: "Hi Ken and all concerned, I wanted to let you know—Our attorney called this morning to tell me that the judge ruled in our favor throwing out the HOAs claims to over \$2,000 in attorney fees stating 'it is unreasonable to demand attorney fees for the collection of bills never sent.' A terrible ordeal laid to rest. Thank you so much for your support. Deborah & David." We're so glad they're relieved.

At the end of the month, we heard that Kate had had an accident, and been hospitalized with severe compression fractures. She hopes to see us when she can drive in but this will not be for six months. We shall miss her.

Business Meeting

After silent worship Meeting for Business commenced with an advice of George Fox, *Epistles*, 1698:

"Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was."

The minutes of the April business meeting were approved. M&O reported that it has considered many aspects of Meeting without need to report in detail to Meeting. Under Religious Education, topics for forums are being arranged by M&O and Ken.

The Treasurer's report for February and March was read by Ken and that for April by Carol B. With heavy expenditures, including some large single annual payments, income has fallen behind expenditures; there is no need yet for concern. Monthly expenses should from now on be fairly modest.

The Nominating Committee brought forward the nominations of Jen as Meeting Clerk, Ken as Treasurer, and George as Recording Clerk after seasoning. These were approved. Jen will cease to be on the Finance and Casa committees. Nom Com also brought forward, after seasoning, the nominations of Bill as Clerk of Trustees, Ken as Corporation Treasurer, and Carol B as trustee. These were approved and later approved by the corporation meeting.

James presented plans for the website. With various changes being considered it was agreed that a second temporary site be opened with an amended layout so that Friends can compare. It is necessary to check that photos ordered by the architects may be used. The Grounds report was that multiple hoses have been bought and Dan has obtained crushed granite to replenish low spots in the courtyard.

Meeting closed in silence.

FCNL in DC

Ruth Flowers coordinates FCNL's legislative work on Capitol Hill. It can be trying and she

“After the little Quaker school closed in 1978, I had time for volunteer work. I was Water Chair of the League of Women Voters (LWV) and on the 201 Wastewater Advisory Committee of City Council. I took a tour of the city's wastewater facilities, Mitchell Lake, a sewage lagoon, among them. I knew SA Audubon members who had been birding there for years and learned that it was recognized as a world-class birding site (in spite of the smell).

In 1987 the new Dos Rios Treatment Plant went online and no more sludge went to Mitchell Lake. It was drying up in July. A Bexar Audubon member worried that there were no mudflats for shorebirds.

We appealed to the director of the City's Wastewater Dept. to put treated effluent from the Leon Creek Treatment Plant into the lake. Under a subcommittee of the 201 committee, treated water was piped (the gravity flow line was already there) into Mitchell Lake and has been maintaining the lake level ever since.

In 1900 the Junior League (JLSA) asked for environmental projects for their volunteers. I designed the JLSA Wetlands Project for them, and 5 girls volunteered the first year. We formed the Mitchell Lake Wetlands Society (MLWS) in 1994, and the project continues independently. When SAWS could find no one to manage the refuge, MLWS created a team of environmental groups to help manage until we found we could not get liability insurance. Local Audubon members made a good case to their National Board to make Mitchell Lake an Audubon Center. It was dedicated in Sept. 2004. MLWS members are supporters and docents of the center. I shall be there May 21st noon - 4 PM for my next time as docent.”

You can go on a birding tour or to learn about other wildlife and nature, with a visit to the Leeper House, now the Center headquarters. To learn more, just ask Ruth.

Budrus

Palestinian residents of the West Bank village of Budrus campaigned nonviolently for ten months against plans to build a barrier through their olive groves. Israeli and other peace activists took part. The Israeli government ultimately changed the route toward the internationally recognized boundary. Julia Bacha has documented this by a film , “Budrus,” available on DVD from Netflix or from Typecast Films.

It shows how women took part, making it more difficult for Israeli soldiers to use bulldozers, etc., against them. It was also difficult for soldiers to act against fellow-Israelis joining the Palestinians. Palestinians saw Israelis protecting them from the military. Amidst this, the villagers were empowered.

It is now suggested that a mass nonviolent Palestinian campaign with participation by other peace movements could, if sustained, end Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Both Israel and Palestine need security. Nonviolence protects both.

A Cry

A cry from Linda Wilk, currently serving as clerk of Hopewell Centre Monthly Meeting : “Business is conducted in the manner of worship to allow all present to listen corporately for the voice of God as it is present. The more of the body of the Meeting who are present, the more likely we are to hear the voice of God as it is meant to be heard by our particular Meeting, in how we are meant to act. As Clerk of our Meeting, I don't take this lightly! We cannot function without YOUR HELP!

Please help us be a whole community by participating in your small portion as a member of that body, thereby contributing to the whole of the discernment of the Meeting. We cannot do it

without you.!”

Our Company

“Throughout American history, at least back to the Pilgrim Fathers, politicians have stoked fear of outsiders and their schemes to force change on an unwilling population. Because such subversives obviously could not do so by democratic means, the argument goes, they must be undermining the state by plotting and conspiracy.

If all else fails, lying helps too. They did it against the Quakers, the blacks, the Irish, the Jews, the Communists and, more recently, evolutionists, feminists, gays, and Muslims. . . “ Stephen Bates, *The Guardian*

We’re in distinguished company.

Miscellany

In a review of a book by Peter Kingsley telling us that the soul of European culture was brought to us by Siberian shamans, Matthew Fox tells us that Kingsley also says that Friend Elias Hicks was “half Native American and half black.” There’s something we never heard before.

We’re so pleased to see that a student team from Clark High School, out on De Zavala, received top honors at the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference in New York. Among other things, they had to debate dealing with hazardous waste, poverty, terrorism, and lack of infrastructure for education and health care. It was at UN headquarters and students got to meet with volunteers from 50 colleges and universities studying international relations.

Two military men, Marine and Naval officers, assistants to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have offered a prescription for American leadership. It is not to be found in dominance, they say, but in “intellectual capital and a sustainable infrastructure of education, health, and social services.” The focus on defense and protectionism has displaced dipolomacy and international development. Military might is not the way. Sustainable energy and agriculture are more important. Their paper was published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

And Tom Friedman in the *NYT*, spoke of Osama bin Laden living long enough to see young people in Arab countries rising peacefully to demand dignity, democracy, and justice without the puritanical Islam and violence he believed necessary. He said that the word heard most among Syrian protestors is “silmiyyah ,” “peacefully.”

It has been suggested that the nonviolent uprisings in Arab nations have made Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda obsolete.

During the Vietnam war an American officer was ridiculed for saying that “we had to destroy the village in order to save it.” It seems that both sides are saying the same in Libya and Yemen. Not to speak of Sherman in Atlanta or the RAF and USAAF in WWII. War is that way.

Amid the tribal conflict in Yemen in which government ministries are going up in flames, a youth leader is quoted as saying:”You can say we don’t belong to any side right now. We swear to God that we will never use weapons or hold arms.” *NYT*, 5.26.11

Lake-Flato, our architects, have won a national award from the American Institute of Architects for their “adaptive reuse” work. Bob Harris tells us this means redesigning an old building for a new use.

We have received a request from two professors for permission to use photos of the meetinghouse with captions about our activities for a book, *San Antonio's Churches*, they are producing.

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Jomo Sundaram, the Asst. Sec-Gen for Economic Development, says that austerity and budget-balancing effectively impedes economic recovery. Such austerity should follow effective growth, depending on strong economies, not precede it, in still weak economies.

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Gene Sharp is interviewed in the May *Foreign Policy*. He says he follows Gandhi, a master strategist, and that the Poles, who toppled Communism nonviolently, were never pacifists. He says that the US should never get mixed up in uprisings – the protestors have to learn to do it themselves. He is described as the “intellectual father of democratic revolution.”

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Tom Eliot was a Friend in Singapore and was a founder member of the People's Action Party which has been the government ever since independence. There was at that time an “emergency,” rather like martial law, in which suspected members of the Communist terrorists could be detained without charge. A socialist friend of Tom's was detained and he asked for permission to visit him in Changi Gaol. Permission was given. After the first free election when one of Tom's friends became minister of internal affairs, Tom was asked if he'd like to see his police record. He went to do this. He found that it contained reports on him from South Africa, where he had previously lived for a few years and the Singapore report. Re the visit to Changi, it said that he was not regarded as a security threat. He was “just a Quaker.”

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“*I hope so*” is a British term used during a meeting for worship for business, when the clerk asks those present if they agree with a minute, Friends will usually say “I hope so” rather than “yes”. It is meant in the sense of “I hope that this is the true guidance of the Holy Spirit”

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Ken taught a class once studying the effects of political violence. They divided up into small groups, each one studying a particular type of violence. When they gave their reports, one, studying guerrilla war, quoted Franz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*) as saying that Algerian Guerillas became fully human only when they took up guns and opposed the French. But another, choosing to study nonviolence, reported that Indians, opposing the British, had finally felt fully human when they accepted violence without retaliating.

## **Gender, anyone?**

A new translation of the Bible has met with opposition to the (very careful) use of gender-neutral words. It is understandable that Christians would not like “I will make you fishers of men” to be replaced by the clumsy “I will send you out to fish for people.” The use of the awkward “he or she” in place of “he” when both are clearly meant, is often avoided in the new translation by using the plural “they.”

Malaysians faced a similar problem, though not one with sacred dimensions, in the use of the words for “you.” It was the same problem early Quakers faced when they made “thou” universal to avoid indicating superiority or inferiority in a specific greeting by choosing either “you” or “thou.”

In Malaysia the problem was solved by the National Language Commission inventing a new word for “you” which was social status-neutral. One Malay man, returning from a lengthy stay in England, did not understand a certain word in a form at the airport. Asking the immigration officer, he was understandably upset when he was told it meant “you.” He had never heard of

it before. He grew up there! He was a Malay! He couldn't not know it! But he didn't!

On the other hand, the gender-neutral Malay word "dia" means either "he" or "she." English needs such a word. But Americans are not going to stomach a national commission telling them what words to use for what.

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Forty years after the passage of the Clean Air Act, it is extraordinary to look at the numbers. Numbers like 200,000 -- which is the count of premature deaths the Clean Air Act prevented in its first 20 years. Over the same period, the Act prevented 672,000 cases of chronic bronchitis and 21,000 cases of heart disease. It avoided 843,000 asthma attacks and 18 million child respiratory illnesses. Lisa P. Jackson, EPA Administrator, *Huffington Post*, Sep 20, 2010

Ramallah Friends School

The school aims at providing a wide range of challenging classes, an atmosphere of open debate, and encouragement for service and activism. Deena Zanu, a teacher of English formed a writing club as a way of practicing peaceful and respectful communication learned in Problem Solving classes. Writing, she says, teaches self-expression and self-respect in a centered, peaceful, way to communicate one's own beliefs.

Eleven seniors from Westtown School in Pennsylvania visited in March. Ramallah FS has a scholarship exchange with Westtown and Penn Charter and Sidwell Friends schools. The Head of the school PTA says "we believe that the Friends School stands out as the best academic institution in the country." We hope you are saying to yourselves "Well, of course!" because of course it should be, not because, "Well, of course, he would say that."

May and June Forums

There were three forums during May. The first was arranged by M&O which continues to sponsor forums in which we discuss queries that take us to the heart of our Quaker worship and practices. Our hope is to hear from each other regarding our individual insights and struggles, in the spirit of the famous Quaker quote, "What canst thou say?"

In the second forum Ken summarized the short paperback book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* by Gene Sharp, giving directions as to how to overthrow a dictator by nonviolent means. This book has been used by young people in Serbia, Tunisia, and Egypt and has been translated into 40 languages. Sharp argues that nonviolence is the most effective process, strengthening the population in its institutions, experience, and resolve. This then prepares it both to ensure a democratic constitution after the dictator's downfall and to take part in it. He warns that careful planning is needed and that coups and violence are counterproductive and he gives 198 different types of actions which may be taken.

Sharon led the third forum in May on the Jewish religious life during Jesus' time. Jesus was an observant Jew, circumcised and following Jewish laws on food and cleanliness. Herod's Temple was the center of the religion, and the temple priests, the Sadducees, controlled the complex rituals of the temple including animal sacrifice twice a day. Hillel was the renowned Pharisee who anticipated the teachings of Jesus. Jesus emphasized loving kindness in contrast to the ritualistic practices of the Sadducee. Hillel commented upon the Torah, saying "Love thy neighbor as thyself, the rest of the Torah is only commentary". After the destruction of the Temple in 73AD and the exile of Jews from Israel, the focus of Jewish religious life changed to family observances and study of the Torah.

References in the San Antonio Public Library:

"Jesus" by David Flusser

“The Temple of Jerusalem” by Joan Comay

References soon to be in the Friends’ Library:

“Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity” by Jacob Neusner

“Jerusalem’s Temple Mount” by Hershel Shanks

“Heritage, Civilization and the Jews” by Abba Eban

M&O will again lead a forum on June 12 and Rik Pierik will visit to speak about AFSC’s programs on June 26.

London Yearly Meeting, 1821

“A punctual attendance at the hour appointed for public worship is a matter of no small importance. If we hurry away from our outward occupations to the meetinghouse, thinking that, by the delay of a few minutes, we shall not be long behind our brethren, we are in great danger of having our thoughts employed on that in which we have been engaged, and of interrupting that holy silence which . . . would often prevail, if all members of a meeting were assembled not only in one place, but at one time, with one and the same great object in view.”

Presidential Wisdom

"This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. . . . We pay for a single fighter with a half-million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. . . . This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

President Eisenhower, quoted by Susan Eisenhower, *Washington Post*.

Plaudits for the FJ

The *FRIENDS JOURNAL* has told us, “Each year in April, the Associated Church Press honors the "Best of the Christian Press" with awards for writing, design, editing, and technical achievement. We're very pleased to announce that the judges bestowed eight honors on *FRIENDS JOURNAL* for articles and issues that appeared in 2010. *FRIENDS JOURNAL* competes against magazines that serve far larger denominations and have significantly more resources than our humble Quaker magazine. Yet this plucky little Journal continues to capture imaginations and spark conversations that bespeak the depth of Quaker thought and life.

I hope you'll join me in congratulating the staff, authors, poets, artists, editors, volunteers, and supporters whose efforts have garnered Friends such recognition from North America's preeminent religious press association.”

FJ's awards were:

Media Review Section

Award of Merit

“Books,” Catherine Wald, book review editor

Critical Review

Award of Merit

“Reflections on the Testimony of Honesty/Integrity” by John Arthur Gallery

Reporting and Writing: Poetry

Honorable Mention (tie)

“First Snow” by Gerald Bosacker
“On the Black Track” by Tina Tau McMahon
Award of Excellence (tie)
“Watch Light Come” by Sunshine F. Branner

Seasonal Article

Award of Merit

“Away in a Manger: A Quaker Midrash” by Charles David Kleymeyer Deonmme

Magazine Cover

Award of Merit

June-July issue, Barbara Benton, art director

Illustration with Article

“Green Jesus: the Meaning of Easter,” Alla Podolsky

It didn’t do very well on Theology. But there were a lot of other categories too.

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We should in humility and joyfulness acknowledge that the supernatural and divine reality we all worship in some form or other transcends all our particular categories of thought and imagining, and that because the divine - however named, however apprehended or conceived - is infinite and we are forever finite, we shall never comprehend the divine completely.

Desmond Tutu.

**Centering**

Entering Meeting,

Sitting.

Center down,

relax.

Still.

...

Silent.

Emptiness.

Suspended.

...

...

Darkness. Empty.

Peace of nothingness.

...

...

Tires are smooth; I must check.

Where shall I go?

No.

...

...

Where did I put the hammer?

Not there.

No.

...

Focus, deep, on spirit,  
Deep summoning deep.

...  
...

Peace.  
Still.  
Yard needs weeding?  
Today.  
No.

...  
...

Center, down,  
Within.  
In.  
Down.

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Ken

## Calendar, June, 2011

Meeting for Worship is held on Sunday at 10 a.m., followed by refreshments and a Forum discussion at 11.30, usually lasting until about 12.45. Children are invited to join worship for the first fifteen minutes, after which they may go to join with the Young Friends program. Child care is available during Forum.

- 2. Thursday ..... Midweek Meeting, 6.30, meetingroom.**
- 5. Sunday ..... Potluck lunch at 11.30.**
- 12. Sunday ..... Forum –Spiritual Quaker Process: M&O.**
- 15, Wednesday ..... Midweek Meeting, 6.30, Julia’s house.**
- 19, Sunday..... Meeting for Business.**
- 26, Sunday ..... Forum – Rik Pierik on the work of AFSC.**

Each Thursday, at 4-5 pm, a silent peace vigil is held at the corners of S. Flores and Commerce, one block west of Main Plaza near City Hall.

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