

February 2025



The Friendly News

Friends Meeting of San Antonio (Quakers)

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National Quaker Lawsuit

Three Quaker Yearly Meetings and two Monthly Meetings have together filed a lawsuit in Maryland on January 27, 2025, against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to block a new federal policy allowing immigration enforcement in houses of worship. This policy has caused fear within migrant-friendly congregations and led to the cancellation of services, the lawsuit claims.

The suit argues that the policy violates the First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom and assembly, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), and federal administrative law, among other legal protections. For decades, houses of worship were considered “sensitive locations” protected from immigration enforcement. The lawsuit also contends that the policy disrupts Quaker worship, which is dependent on the spirit-led participation of those called to take part in worship on any given day, by creating a chilling effect that essentially prevents participation at Quaker religious services by certain individuals.

The South Central Yearly Meeting (SCYM) Peace & Justice Committee met to discuss the situation and possible ways it can be helpful. On February 2, FMSA held a called Meeting for Business to discuss possible FMSA actions. The following minute was approved:

MINUTE 2025.02.01: FMSA approves joining in support of the lawsuit, filed January 27, 2025 by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Adelphi Friends Meeting, and Richmond Friends Meeting against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Kristi Noem, through public statements, an amicus brief, and financial support, with continued discernment.

Advice for February

*How did your relationship with meeting deepen in 2024?
How will you build on that in 2025?*

February 2025 Calendar

Regular Activities

- **Sunday Meetings for Worship, 10:00-11:00**
 - In-person in Meetinghouse and on Zoom
- **First Day School Children's Program, every Sunday, 10:00-11:00**
 - Childcare is available during forums and Meetings for Business
- **Midweek Meeting for Worship at Gary and Vivian's home**
 - First Wednesday of each month, 7:00 PM
 - 307 E. Mistletoe Avenue (between McCullough and St. Mary's, we will keep the colored lights on)
 - Please join us!
- **Potluck Lunch - 1st Sunday, 11:30-12:30**
- **Sunday Forums - 2nd & 4th Sundays, 11:30-12:30**
 - In-person in Meetinghouse and on Zoom
- **Meeting for Worship with Attention To Business; 3rd Sunday, 11:30-12:30**
 - In-person in Meetinghouse and on Zoom
- **Friday Meeting for Worship, 8:00-8:30 am, Zoom only**
- **"Meeting for Weeding," 3rd Saturday, 9:00-1:00 (summer 8:00-12:00)**
- For ALL Zoom Meetings:
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to join by Zoom; ID # 976 0522 6497; passcode: 194077
 - by telephone at +1 346 248 7799, then enter ID#

Special Events

- February 9 Forum: How Do Welcome New Attendees?
February 15 Meeting for Weeding, 9:00-1:00
February 23 Forum: Finance Committee Panel Discussion, 11:30-12:30

First Day School Schedule

February 2 Cooking for Potluck with Gretchen
February 9 Peace in Our Hearts and Heads
February 16 Peace in Our Spaces and Places
February 23 Quaker History: Alternatives to Violence Project

Donations for Religious Education

As you clean out your craft rooms and move on to new hobbies, the Religious Education (RE) program would be glad to receive any of the following, even opened packs or incomplete sets:

- fun paper (construction, scrapbooking, painting, drawing, etc.)
- markers that work
- crayons in any condition
- colored pencils
- safety scissors (esp. a left-handed pair!)
- floor pillows

You can drop any goodies off in the RE room or in the RE milk crate in the community room. Thank you for letting us give your supplies a new home! "

Upcoming Forums

How Do Welcome New Attenders? - February 9, 2025

This forum will be part of a series of conversations that will pull topics from the State of the Meeting forum, with an overarching theme of individual response vs. community response.

Finance Committee Panel Discussion - February 23, 2025

The Finance Committee will present a panel discussion on the topic of the Meeting's finances and planning for the future. The discussion will give the Meeting insight into the topics the committee considers when it meets and provide opportunities for Friends to ask questions and provide input. It is critical that Friends attend this forum and help shape the financial future of the Meeting.

Rilke Reading Group

We had a recent forum discussing the Quaker distrust of creeds, of dogma or metaphysical assertions. Yet how can we be a “religious society” and not discuss the tenets of a faith practice? How can we then have access, collectively, to a shared spiritual experience? Don’t we need to be reciting a creedal statement, together, for this to happen?

What is it that seems suspect about creedal statements? The philosopher Martin Heidegger suggests that our modern times have been overtaken by the sensibilities of *techne*, that we frame everything now in terms of how it can be used, as a resource to be built upon, as a means to some calculated end. Even our spirituality is used to try to gain a sense of security in the cosmos, our “ticket to ride” on the heavenly escalator. And this is inescapably true: we do need to have a sense of moving toward a safe harbor, we do need some sort of compass that points out a direction to follow. How do we even know if there is a “better” place to move toward, what is the source of reassurance? It is no wonder that people grasp at dogmatic certainty as a way to map this journey.

Heidegger contrasts the objectifying sensibilities of *techne* with those of the poetic, *poiesis*. Within *techne*, we view the world (and the spirit) as a resource to be used, and we, therefore, de-mystify it: In handling it as a known quantity, it becomes “disenchanted.” Words become literal, and our creeds become inflexible. Poetic sensibilities reverse this process, using words to suggest ways that the world has hidden connections, new meanings, which open us into an experience beyond the literal world. Heidegger describes poetic “thinking” as a realm of “truth,” that there is indeed a kind of directional substance to this sort of sensibility, a progressive discerning of what has worth in a way that moves us deeper into the spiritual life. The realm opened up by *poiesis* is alive, and its insights penetrate with greater profundity than do those of a dogma.

It is suggested that Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) is a poet who has helped with this task. There is a relatively new translation of his book “Rilke’s Book of Hours: Love Poems to God” (Riverhead Books, 2005) by two women who are excellent poets in their own right, Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy. It would be a fine thing to steadily read a handful of these poems, and, maybe once monthly, meet to discuss them and share our response. Maybe before or after Meeting, to be decided by those interested? Contact Gary at vgmac1026@gmail.com if this sounds good.

Carol Balliet - Another Friend lost

Carol Balliet died on Thursday, January 30, 2025. Carol was an active member of FMSA for many years, including serving as clerk of the Meeting. More news will be forthcoming about her memorial service. We are holding her children, George, Catherine, and Rachel, and their families in the Light.

Community Updates

Seven Friends represented FMSA at the Martin Luther King, Jr. March on January 20th. They included John, Robert, Denise, Faith, Brendan, Jillian, and Rebecca (L-R). Temperatures were chilly, but MLK's spirit lived on!



Call me 'they'

by Val Liveoak

It's likely that most people assume that I am a cisgender woman. And I don't deny it.

I am, however, no longer willing to use gendered pronouns to describe myself. While 'they' sounds odd for a singular person, it seems to be the most common usage.

So, my friends, call me 'they'.

Reflections on Friends Journal

The January 2025 issue of the Friends Journal focused on how Quakers worldwide “engage with integrity with our finances.” From a meeting in Michigan using financial initiatives to embrace anti-racism to a meeting in Philadelphia exploring “impact investing” to make investments with the “intention to generate positive, measurable social and environmental impacts alongside a financial return,” and halfway around the world to Africa where the concept of *ubuntu*: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” informs African Friends’ views of how they should use money.

One article featured a personal reflection on tithing in which the author explained how he grew from admiring those who tithed while feeling like doing so himself was out of reach to joyfully tithing for various causes that he believes further Quaker testimonies.

These articles reminded me of Desmond Tutu’s famous quote, “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.” As Friends, I think we try to find a balance between using our time and money to pull people out of the river and addressing social issues that keep a steady stream of people falling in.

If these topics interest you, I encourage you to check out this issue online at the [Friends Journal website](#). They may provide good food for thought as we prepare for the Finance Committee forum on February 23rd!

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if you have any news, articles, poetry, etc. to share. Photos are great, too!

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