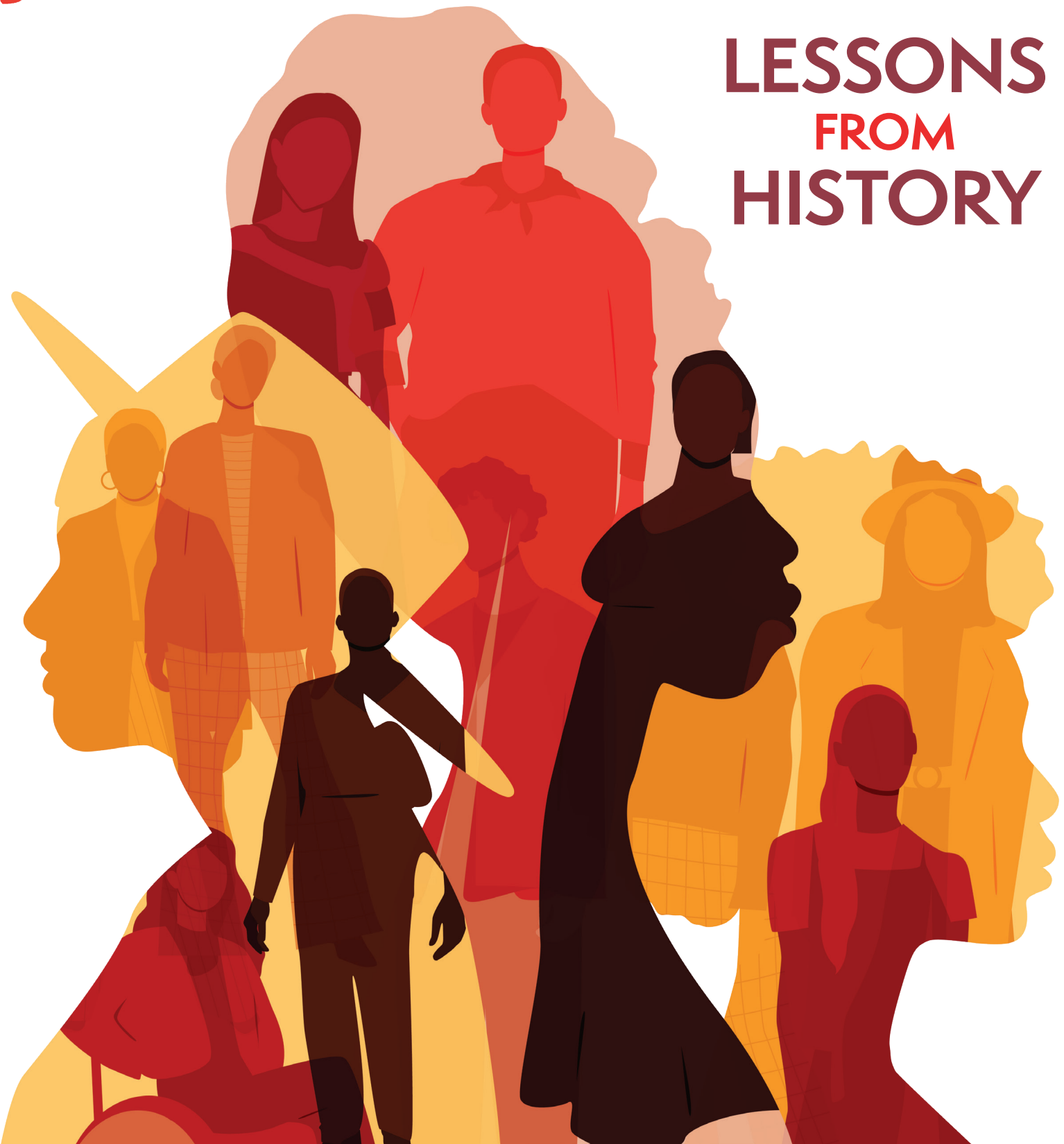
FRIENDS JOURNAL

QUAKER THOUGHT AND LIFE TODAY

08/2025

LESSONS FROM HISTORY



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Learning from Our History, and Making Our Own

Friends Journal readers in the past several years have joined us in a project to reexamine the whitewashed history many of us learned about Quakers, slavery, race relations, and equality. In this issue, which emerged in large part from a fortuitous slate of well-researched manuscripts sent our way, this project continues.

Abolitionism didn't emerge fully formed from the hearts of Quakers in the eighteenth century, of course, but neither can it be credited solely to the tireless work of White Quaker abolitionist ministers like John Woolman and Benjamin Lay. In "Black Resistance to Quaker Enslavement: A Moral Reckoning," Jim Fussell recounts stories of the enslaved people whose escape from and sabotage of their Quaker captors helped to advance the cause of abolition among Friends in the mid-Atlantic region by making the enterprise of chattel slavery increasingly untenable in an economic and practical sense.

Presenting a more recent historical counterpoint where Friends again found themselves astride a racial and social conflict, Natalie Fraser and Chioma Ibida have undertaken new archival research into Quakers' involvement along the margins of the city of Philadelphia's standoff with the radical Black MOVE community in the late 1970s—the group that would be murderously firebombed by city police in 1985. Fraser and Ibida illustrate what happens when well-intentioned Friends whose personal and economic safety are not directly threatened (by virtue of their social and racial privilege) act as "witnesses" rather than in "risky solidarity." By lifting up the ways in which an attitude of neutrality and silence can perpetuate an unjust status quo, the authors give us a lens through which we might inspect our actions in our communities today.

The year 2025 marks ten years since the *Obergefell* decision in the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. Our staff writer Sharlee DiMenichi interviewed Friends from around the United States about the discernment, within families and within Quaker congregations, that led some Friends groups to affirm and bless these unions decades before federal recognition.

Taken as a whole, this issue leads this reader to wonder: where are we Friends, now? Are we hiding in positions of cozy safety, or do we seek boldly to be in solidarity with the oppressed? Where can Quakers lay hands on Martin Luther King Jr.'s metaphorical "moral arc of the universe" and work to bend it toward justice?

I'd like to introduce a new member of our editorial team. Renzo Mejia Carranza joined us in June as a corresponding editor focusing on Latin America. A member of Fairfield (Ind.) Meeting, Renzo was born in Guatemala City and now lives in Richmond, Ind., where he is pursuing an MDiv at Earlham School of Religion. Along with fluency in multiple modern and classical languages, Renzo brings to our work his passion for theology and learning about the Quaker tradition. The addition of Renzo to our staff is part of Friends Publishing's initiative to better gather and share stories from Quakers all over the world. Thanks to Renzo, our editors have the capacity to review article submissions from Friends written in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, as well as English. This means that readers can also look forward to benefiting from a greater diversity and breadth of Quaker perspectives. I can't wait.

Yours in peace,

Gabriel Ehri
Executive Director
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Write for FJ: *Friendsjournal.org/submissions*

- **Quaker Fiction** (due Aug. 18)
- **What Do We Believe?** (due Sept. 22)
- **Indigenous Peoples and Friends** (due Oct. 20)

POETRY

Cover art by Stafeeva

DEPARTMENTS

QUAKERS TODAY

Quakers and a 300-Mile Testimony

Season four of our podcast is finished but don't worry: we're sharing special gap episodes all summer. In June we featured audio excerpts from the Quaker Walk to Washington, a remarkable 300-mile trek from Flushing, Queens, to Washington, D.C. July's episode focused on "Quakers, Revivals, and Reevaluating Faith." Follow along at *QuakersToday.org* or your favorite podcast app.

Mixed reactions to reviving Friends

I felt discouraged after reading the June-July *Friends Journal* (Quaker Revivals), which seemed to have a pervasive concern that Quakers are aging and dying out. This is not the spiritual reality that I live in. I wonder if the concern is rooted in fear.

If Protestant churches want to have rock and roll music and pastors who are charismatic speakers, in order to improve membership, they are welcome to do whatever they want—it's not my business. But the sense I have of my meeting is that our members fully support our current, mostly quiet and contemplative practice. Wanting enhanced attendance through a more attractive format than "quietism" does not reflect my values and is not how I want to live.

It seemed that a strong pitch was being made against Quietism and the values of the late seventeenth century. I was left hanging as to what current quietest practices are being referred to, that are seen as problematic. The strong encouragement of evangelism and some sort of revival in the June-July issue seemed to suggest that this is the way for future membership decline to be averted.

I would have appreciated an explanation of how meetings whose members valued the customary silence punctuated by inspired messages might be expected to adapt to the proposed changes.

Rob Dreyfus
Swarthmore, Pa.

From Martin Kelley's "Among Friends" editorial to the "Love Your Neighbor Is a Call to Action" viewpoint of Tim Gee, every contribution to the recent Quaker revivals issue of *Friends Journal* was interesting and inspiring. I particularly enjoyed Catriona Forrest's "Breaking the Old Rules: Creating Space for Quaker Revival." Embracing newly opened space (and finding innovative ways to fill it) is an organic, sustainable way to approach the life-cycle of meetings. I'll be thinking about that, and the other articles and poems in this issue, for a long time.

Friends Journal is a treasure. I am grateful to you and your staff for your efforts.

Vicki Winslow
Liberty, N.C.

The June-July issue of *Friends Journal* relating to Quaker revival is excellent. I would like to add my own personal thoughts to this conversation. As a Friend for over 75 years, I have seen many changes. I have always found us experimenting with our spiritual lives, not forgetting our past history but using it to face the present and the future. Here are some examples that have affected my life.

Around the time when American Friends Service Committee turned from a focus on relief and reconstruction work to advocacy, it published a pamphlet ("Peace in the Middle East") seen by many as pro-Palestinian.

One evening at our AFSC-New York Regional Executive Committee meeting, the Jewish Defense League stormed into our meeting. This small band would not let us continue. We wondered whether we should call the police. Our solution was to hear their concerns and position and also ask them to listen to our Quaker position. The conclusion, after a long night, was to hold future meetings together. It was a bleary-eyed group that went home the next morning.

As members of the national AFSC Executive Committee during the Vietnam War, we held a silent vigil outside the White House in Washington and requested a meeting with our "Quaker" President Nixon. He refused but sent out Henry Kissinger, then the U.S. national security advisor, who took the time to listen to our concerns about the need for nonviolence. These experiences and more helped to renew and revitalize my Quakerism. We are Friends of Truth and the Light.

Quakers have a history of responding to situations, especially when we know how important it is to uphold our testimonies. I believe there is an openness to constant renewal and revitalization. George Fox and those Valiant 60 knew it wouldn't be easy. In every decade and in every generation, Friends have had to face the world with love and understanding, never forgetting the very foundation that our traditions and testimony rest on. I believe we still have an important message to share with all of humankind.

George Rubin
Medford, N.J.

A plea to avoid inflammatory language

Several months ago, there was a QuakerSpeak interview with American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) general secretary Joyce Ajlouny entitled "What Does Just Peace in Palestine and Israel Look Like?" (*QuakerSpeak.com*, Mar.). In this interview, she specified that she wanted Palestinians to live "from the river to the sea."

She implied that Israelis could live together with Palestinians, but her choice of words is chilling. "From the river to the sea" is a rallying cry of Hamas, whose attack on and abduction of 251 civilians in Israel sparked the current war that Aljouny is decrying (Hamas enshrined it in their 2017 charter). The Anti-Defamation League considers it to be an antisemitic slogan. Far from words of peace and freedom, this phrase is used to incite violence against Israelis and diaspora Jews.

I call on Ajlouny and AFSC to apologize for the inflammatory language, and make future appeals for Palestinian liberation without hate speech. And I call on Friends who want a just peace in Palestine and Israel to do the same.

Roscoe Mathieu
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Forum letters should be sent with the writer's name and address to forum@friendsjournal.org. *Each letter is limited to 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity. Because of space constraints, we cannot publish every letter. Letters can also be left as comments on individual articles on* Friendsjournal.org.

Hold Yourself in the Light

I'm an early riser. I suppose it started when I was a teenager, and it really became solidified as a habit when I worked for a coffee shop. My shift would often start around 6:30 a.m. so I would have to be up at 4:30 or 5:00—which admittedly was difficult. Nowadays, I wake up at 5:00 a.m. and roll out of bed. I turn off my alarm, and I go and sit in silence on the living room couch.

I have two very young, very loud children. You can imagine finding space or making space for silence is nearly impossible. But it's so important. Kids are great; they require us to give a great deal of our own life and energy in order for them to thrive. Parents have to be intentional about recharging not only for themselves but for their kids—and they have to do it in the midst of utter chaos! For me, I have a small window in the dark hours of the morning.

As Friends we talk about holding each other in the Light, that is to say we hold each other in the divine presence of God through prayer, words, or ministry. That's a fantastic thing to do! But do we make a habit of holding ourselves in the Light?

We must make time and hold space for ministry in our daily lives. While prayer, meditation, and reading are all important, silence and stillness are paramount to this daily discipline.

There's a passage of Scripture about a young prophet named Samuel who hears the voice of God but does not understand that the voice is from God. He mistakenly turns to the words and presence of a priest. We can find ourselves consulting the words and thoughts of pastors, preachers, books, and theologians when we ought to be saying, "I hear you, Lord" and listening to the still, small voice of the Inward Light.

In the past, most of my devotional time had instrumental music playing in the background, something to curate my mood. But even good music is speaking and might be coloring or overpowering the Light. Some years ago, I decided to turn it all off. No music, no audiobooks, and no podcasts. Left alone to hold myself in the Inward Light.

Most of our personal faith work feels transactional. We read Scriptures and texts to gain knowledge. We pray to be heard by God. We minister to positively touch those around us. We meditate on society and its great needs. But this one area is not transactional, because the Light is ever present and ever speaking within us, whether we are listening or not. No striving, no working, only patiently waiting for the work to be done within.

All of our energy in life comes from the Inward Light. If we have not held ourselves in that Light, we cannot hope to fulfill the work we have been called to. We must daily submit ourselves to the work of the Light. We must silence the things around us and wait patiently with open arms, to remain fully in faith, ready to receive.

D.S. Leverett
Noble, Okla.

Love of silent worship

I attend a silent, Liberal meeting, Fairhope (Ala.) Meeting. Peter Blood-Patterson's "Coming Out from Under Our Bushel" (*FJ* June-July) is well written, welcome, and touches on concerns I have. The value I obtain from attending our silent worship is hard to explain; suffice it to say that the discipline of our meeting allows me to see glimmers of the light and, I hope, live my life in a more moral and meaningful way. I would not feel comfortable in other traditions, Quaker or otherwise, which dictated specific theology, including a belief in biblical teachings and stories (two things that I believe to be different). I highly doubt the practices of my meeting and my own personal religious discipline would be seen as being that of a Friend by the early Quakers but, after reflection, I realize that the concern is irrelevant, as the value I get out of the discipline of our Quaker worship is so personal as to mean that others' acceptance and approval is almost irrelevant.

Harry Pond
Mobile, Ala.

Showing up together

It's wonderful to read a piece in *Friends Journal* lifting up children's religious education, and fitting that it's part of the Quaker revivals issue ("Sparking Still" by Suzanne W. Cole Sullivan, *FJ* June-July). In my ministry travels among Friends, I encounter meetings that are growing where there's a focus on the kinds of community and creativity that Suzanne describes, that is often grounded in a concern to support young families. A children's program also serves the circles of people around the children themselves—the adults in their families and the meeting as a whole. What we offer to families for their children—whether it's a scholastic model with "lessons," story and play, childcare, or welcome in worship—supports the adults' experience of inclusion and belonging. The "showing up together," with children being "known and recognized," is vital. Beyond content or its delivery in a children's program, there is a growing edge that expands when we center belonging.

Melinda Wenner Bradley
Glen Mills, Pa.

Photo by J.

BLACK RESISTANCE to QUAKER ENSLAVEMENT

A MORAL RECKONING

Jim Fussell

In the stillness of the Third Haven Meetinghouse on Maryland's Eastern Shore, a Black woman rose to speak. Her voice cut through the silence as she called upon Friends to free those they enslaved. Though her name was not recorded, her boldness remained in that meeting's oral tradition. The white Quakers present did not heed her words that day, but history shows that Black voices—spoken, shouted, whispered in the dark—were among the most powerful forces pushing Quakers to renounce enslavement.

For over 12 decades from about 1657 to about 1777, Quakers were deeply entangled in the practice of human enslavement. At last, in the 1760s and 1770s, Quakers as a body underwent a moral revival, a process of compelling Quaker enslavers to manumit those they enslaved or else be disowned, meaning removal from membership for behavior incompatible with the testimonies of the Society of Friends. This change did not happen in a vacuum. This change was not the result simply of inward reflection or corporate discernment. Quaker communities were compelled to act, in no small part, through the persistent resistance of those they enslaved. Enslaved Black people did not wait for white consciences to awaken. They confronted, escaped, sabotaged, and some paid with their lives for acts of defiance that made it harder and costlier for Quakers to continue enslaving others. For too long, the story of Quaker abolition has been told as one of conscience. This article recovers another truth: it was Black resistance that forced the Religious Society

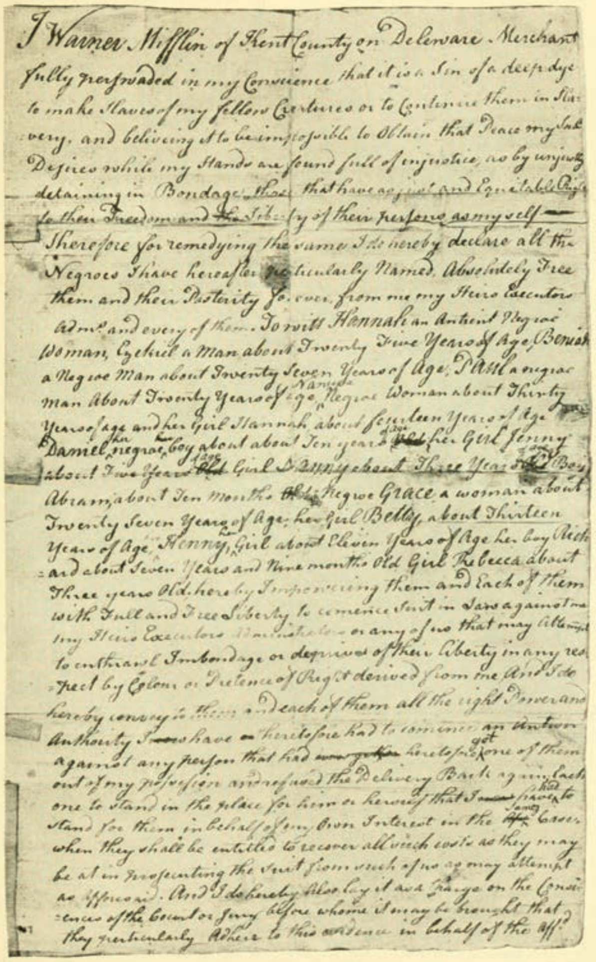
Jim Fussell is a scholar in residence at Earlham School of Religion and a longtime member of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. He is a descendent of both Quaker enslavers and Quaker abolitionists.

of Friends to confront its deepest contradictions. Here are some examples:

Confrontation: Speaking Truth in the Fields and in Meetinghouses

In the summer of 1759, on a plantation in Accomack, Virginia, a 14-year-old boy named James turned to his enslaver's son, Warner Mifflin, and challenged him. Both boys were the same age, but their fates had been determined by the institution of slavery. James asked why he must work in the tobacco fields while Warner was free to study and learn. "And by and by, my children must work here too—so your children can go study?"

Warner Mifflin, embarrassed and angry at the time, never forgot James's words. That moment of confrontation, spoken not during Quaker worship, but in the fields of forced labor, planted a seed that grew over time. Mifflin later became a prominent Quaker abolitionist, first in 1775 by freeing James and 26 others he held in bondage. And Warner paid James restitution for years of forced labor he had stolen from him.

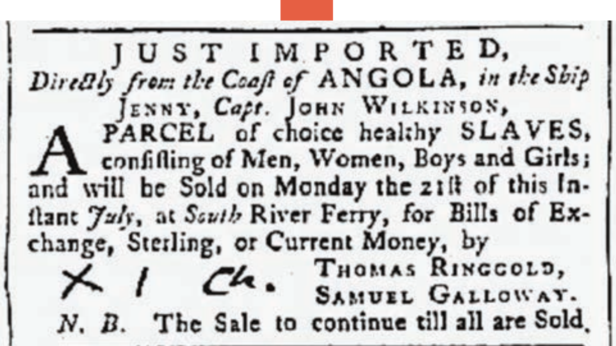

I Warner Mifflin of Kent County on Delaware Merchant fully persuaded in my Conscience that it is a Sin of a deep dye to make Slaves of my fellow Creatures or to Continue them in Slavery, and believing it to be impossible to Obtain that Peace my Soul Desires while my Hands are found full of injustice, as by unjustly detaining in Bondage those that have as just and Equitable Right to their Freedom and the Liberty of their persons as myself — Therefore for remedying the same I do hereby declare all the Negroes I have hereafter particularly Named, Absolutely Free them and their Posterity for ever from me my Heirs Executors Admrs. and every of them. To witt Hannah an Antient Negroe Woman, Ezekiel a Man about Twenty Five Years of Age, Beniah a Negroe Man about Twenty Seven Years of Age, Sam a negroe man About Twenty Years of Age, Nanny a Negroe Woman about Thirty Years of age and her Girl Hannah about fourteen Years of Age, Daniel the negroe boy about about Ten years of age her Girl Jenny about Two Years of age Girl Danny about Three Years of age Boy Abram about Ten months old Negroe Grace a woman about Twenty Seven Years of Age, her Girl Betty about Thirteen Years of Age, Henny, Girl about Eleven Years of Age her boy Richard about Seven Years and Nine months Old Girl Rebecca about Three years Old. hereby Impowering them and Each of them with Full and Free Liberty to commence Suit in Law against me my Heirs Executors Administrators or any of us that may attempt to enthrawl In bondage or deprive of their Liberty in any respect by Colour or Pretence of Right derived from me And I do hereby convey to them and each of them all the right Power and Authority I have or heretofore had to commence an Action against any person that had got heretofore one of them out of my possession and refused the Delivery Back again Each one to stand in the place for him or herself that I had to stand for them in behalf of my Own Interest in the Same Cases when they shall be entitled to recover all such costs as they may be at in prosecuting the Suit from such of us as may attempt as aforesaid. And I do hereby Also lay it as a Charge on the Consciences of the Court or Jury before whome it may be brought that they particularly Adhere to this evidence in behalf of the [illegible]

Above: Warner Mifflin freed his slaves, declaring in his letter "it is a sin of a deep dye to make slaves of my fellow creatures."

Escape: A Direct Rejection of Enslavement

Words were not enough. Escape was among the most frequent and direct forms of resistance for which we have records. Running away was an act of defiance that struck at the heart of an enslaver's power. It was also a profound declaration of self-ownership.

In 1746, a man named Dolphin fled from the Maryland plantation of Quaker enslaver and slave trader Samuel Galloway (1720–1785) of West River Meeting. He was last seen 60 miles south in Virginia. Did he reach the Great Dismal Swamp, where Maroon communities of self-liberated people gathered? Did he continue further, perhaps to Spanish Florida, where Black fugitives were granted freedom in exchange for military service? We do not know. What we do know is that his flight would have disrupted Galloway's household and shaken the illusion that slavery was a stable institution.


JUST IMPORTED,
Directly from the Coast of ANGOLA, *in the Ship* JENNY, *Capt.* JOHN WILKINSON,

A PARCEL of choice healthy SLAVES, consisting of Men, Women, Boys and Girls; and will be Sold on Monday the 21st of this Instant *July*, at *South* River Ferry, for Bills of Exchange, Sterling, or Current Money, by

THOMAS RINGGOLD,
SAMUEL GALLOWAY.

N. B. The Sale to continue till all are Sold.

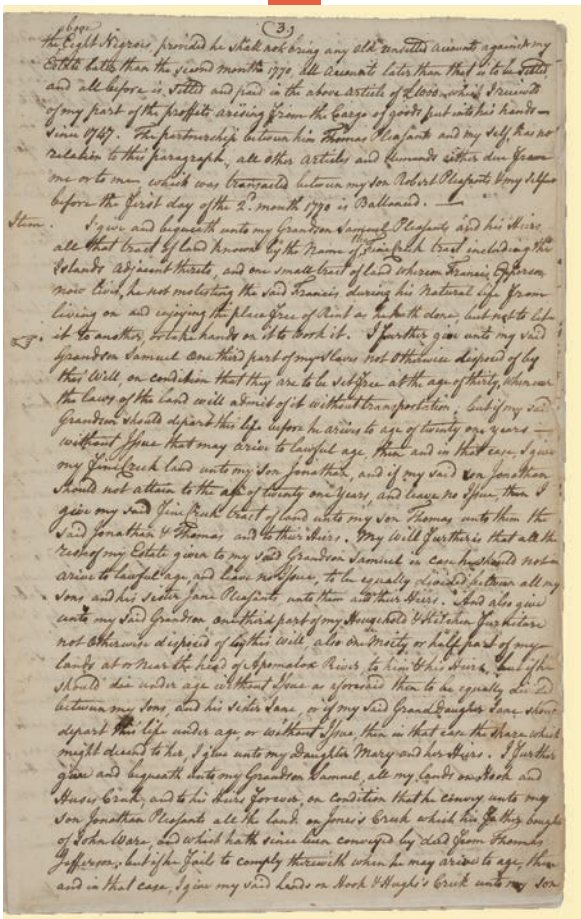
Below: Enslaver of Dolphin, Samuel Galloway, partnered with his brother-in-law Thomas Ringgold as merchants and transatlantic slave traders.

Another freedom-seeker, Jack, escaped from the Quaker Pleasants family of Henrico Meeting in Virginia in 1752. He timed his flight carefully, choosing a cold, moonless, winter night that would give him the greatest chance of avoiding capture. Two weeks after the first published notice, a second "run away" notice was published, suggesting that Jack may have succeeded. His actions raised the cost of slavery—not only in financial terms, but in moral reckoning as well. Nearly two decades later, his enslaver John Pleasants III (1698–1771), aided by his son Robert, arranged for the manumission of more than 500 enslaved people in his will. Did Jack's escape contribute to that change? It is likely. Robert later became a prominent advocate of abolition.

Also during wintertime, but on the full moon in early January of 1754, a teenage boy named Ash escaped from John Wardell (1732–1777) of Shrewsbury Meeting in New Jersey. Each step was a risk, but still he ran.

In the fall of 1762, Peter fled on horseback from Isaac

Webster (1730–1799) of Deer Creek Meeting in Maryland. Ten months later, on a nearby plantation—perhaps with Peter's help—a man named Nace led a group escape from the plantation of James Lee Jr. Lee had recently been disowned by his meeting for betting on horse races, though most of his close relatives remained members of Deer Creek Meeting. The escape attempt ended in tragedy: James Lee (1701–1778) and a group of armed men hunted the escapees, killing Nace and wounding two others. Yet even in death, Nace's resistance had an effect. Three young Quakers—Jacob Comley, Thomas Hooker, and William Parrish Jr.—who had joined the manhunt were disowned after just one month of deliberation by Gunpowder Meeting, signaling a moral revulsion growing within the Society of Friends over complicity in the enforcement of slavery. Unlike the Mifflins and Pleasants, the Lee and Webster families chose to continue enslaving people, separating themselves from the Religious Society of Friends. As more Quaker families chose slavery over faithfulness, meetings began to draw sharper lines: Resistance had made neutrality impossible.



The will of John Pleasants III, which asked his heirs to free hundreds of slaves when they reached 30 years of age.

Arson: Raising the Cost of Enslavement

Not all resistance involved flight or verbal confrontation. Some stayed where they were and struck directly at the system. On the night of September 1, 1750, just days after the harvest, two enslaved women, Grace and Jane, set fire to a tobacco barn in West River, Maryland, owned by their Quaker enslaver, Joseph Galloway (1699–1752). The fire spread quickly, destroying an entire season's crop.

This was no accident. Court records described their actions as premeditated, carried out with "malice aforethought." Grace and Jane knew exactly what they were doing. Tobacco was the economic backbone of slavery in the Chesapeake, and by burning it, they attacked the institution at its root.

Their resistance cost them their lives. They were sentenced to death and hanged on April 17, 1751. But their defiance sent a message: enslavement depended on violence, and those who profited from it were never secure. Wealth, barns, and fields could be turned to ash.

Such acts accumulated over time, shaking Quaker attachment to slavery and forcing a moral reckoning. The Quaker testimony against war could not coexist with the violence slavery required. Friends who enslaved others lived in contradiction to the faith they claimed to follow.

A Spectrum of Deliberate Resistance

Black resistance to Quaker enslavement took many forms—some quiet, others explosive—but nearly all were intentional. Enslaved people first resisted by holding fast to their identities: whispering African names, singing spirituals encoded with meaning, healing (or harming) with medicinal herbs, and telling stories that preserved freedom. They taught each other to read in secret, preached deliverance, and sustained families and communities—even when torn apart by sale or violence. These were not small acts. They were daily expressions of self-determination—lesser risk, but grounded in quiet courage.

Others took bolder risks. They slowed work, broke tools, feigned illness, or left without permission to visit children or spouses on other plantations. Some confronted enslavers, bargained for better conditions, gave false information, forged passes, disrupted cruelty, or sued for their freedom. These acts of autonomy came with greater danger—carried out under watchful eyes, with pounding hearts. Still, they declared: we will not make this easy for you.

And then there were those whose resistance struck at the core of the system. Some fled under cover of night. Some destroyed property. Others aided escape, kept

weapons, fought back, used poison, or planned uprisings.

These acts were strategic and purposeful. From Jack fleeing on a moonless winter night to Grace and Jane setting fire just after harvest, each decision was timed to speak clearly, cost dearly, and leave a lasting mark—on their Quaker enslavers and on the conscience of the Religious Society of Friends.

The Cost of Resistance—and Its Impact on Quakers

Resistance came at a terrible price. Some, like Nace, Grace, and Jane, were killed. Others, like James and Peter, lived long enough to see freedom. Some disappear from the records—did Dolphin find sanctuary? Did Jack make it to safety? We do not know, but what we do know is that these acts of defiance forced Quakers to confront their complicity.

For many decades, Quakers debated, resisted change, and sometimes disciplined those among them who spoke too loudly against slavery. But as enslaved Black people continued to resist—through words, escapes, arson, and defiance—the cost of maintaining enslavement became too great. While records seldom document a direct line between an act of resistance and a Quaker decision, the accumulation of such acts became impossible to ignore. Slowly, over several decades of intense internal struggle, the Society of Friends underwent a true moral revival, a spiritual reckoning that redefined the boundaries of faithfulness.

In 1758, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting appointed a committee of five to visit enslavers. Eventually, one by one yearly meetings in the North American British colonies made holding people in bondage a disownable offense: New England in 1772, New York in 1774, Philadelphia in 1776, Maryland in 1778, North Carolina in 1783 and finally Virginia Yearly Meeting in 1784. Change came because people enslaved by Quakers made it impossible to ignore the moral crisis at the heart of the Quaker faith.

A Legacy of Resistance

Too often, history remembers white Quaker abolitionists, like Robert Pleasants, Warner Mifflin, Anthony Benezet, John Woolman and Benjamin Lay, but forgets the Black people who compelled them to act. The names of those who resisted—James, Grace, Jane, Jack, Dolphin, Ash, Nace and many others—must be spoken aloud. So must we also remember the voice of the Black woman who broke the silence in Third Haven Meeting. They are not footnotes to history; they are the beating heart of the struggle for freedom. And some of those who resisted enslavement are buried in or beside Quaker burial grounds, their graves unmarked, their names often unrecorded, yet their presence enduring as a quiet testament to the moral reckoning they helped to bring about.

Today, Friends continue to wrestle with the legacy of Quaker involvement in slavery. We are stewards of memory—inheritors of responsibility to act. In that reckoning, we must center the truth: the push toward justice begun with the words and actions of those who Quakers enslaved. Sometimes out of the silence, sometimes in fire, sometimes with a desperate flight across frozen ground. Black resistance made Quaker abolition possible. And the echoes of that resistance still call us to action.

We would also do well to remember the words spoken a century later by Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist who had once been enslaved in Maryland. On August 3, 1857, in Ontario County, New York, Douglass said:

> This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.
>
> Find out just what any people will quietly submit to, and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them . . . and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both.

In the silence of Friends meetings today, we are called again to listen—not just inwardly, but to the voices that history tried to suppress. The Spirit spoke through the feet of escapees, the confrontational words of James, the fire lit by Grace and Jane and the courage of the woman at the Third Haven Meetinghouse. These were not just acts of resistance—they were prophetic ministry. And they ask us still: what testimony will you bear? ❑

Third Haven Meetinghouse.

Photo by Julie Heiland

THE BURNING of PENNSYLVANIA HALL

What Our Quaker Ancestors Can Teach Us about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Trudy Bayer

Pennsylvania Hall officially opened its doors on May 14, 1838, and welcomed all Philadelphians to the celebration, regardless of race, sex, or status, a co-mingling and inclusivity never before witnessed in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Built by abolitionists as a "temple to free discussion," it stood just four days before a mob, enraged by the politics of "race-mixing" and women and men speaking together equally, destroyed it by fire. Inclusion and equity have always been incendiary. Like the unrelenting assault to crush diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) ravaging our nation today, the burning of Pennsylvania Hall is a similarly tragic illustration of just how deeply our fear of cultural diversity runs and how easily that fear ignites into violence.

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Pennsylvania Hall was an impressive three-story structure built by the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, which sold $20 shares to two thousand individuals to fund its construction. Countless others contributed labor and materials. Often the target of violence, abolitionists were unable to obtain venues willing to risk hosting their meetings. Pennsylvania Hall was their solution, a safe environment where abolitionists, women's rights advocates, and other reformers could assemble and speak freely.

The hall housed an abolitionist bookstore, reading room, newspaper, and store stocked with slave-free labor products. Still, naming it Abolitionist Hall would mark the building as a target; a safer choice was made: naming it after the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

It was situated in the center of Philadelphia in a Quaker neighborhood, generally more supportive of the abolitionists' cause and home to many Quaker reformers, most notably Lucretia Mott. Mott, a key figure in the Convention antislavery meetings taking place during that opening week, herself became a target of the mob's rage on the night they destroyed Pennsylvania Hall.

Intended to crush free expression and terrorize reformers, the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall instead cast a spotlight on the savagery of pro-slavery politics.

The hall stood just blocks from the old Pennsylvania State House, where the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were signed (abolitionists were just starting to call the statehouse bell the "Liberty Bell.") The location of Pennsylvania Hall was a metaphor for the abolitionist movement: these reformers believed that they were advancing the fundamental principles of democracy. Yet, those foundational symbols also cast a very dark shadow insofar as they also codified the right to own slaves and bestowed the rights of liberty and citizenship on White men only. Forty-one of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence owned slaves.

During the four days that it stood, various antislavery meetings were held in Pennsylvania Hall, and those events were attended by Blacks and Whites, men and women, who mingled and spoke as equals. These brazen politics of inclusion and equality stood in stark contrast to the realities of the day, when more than two million people remained enslaved. Amalgamation or race-mixing was taboo, and women were still without any individual rights and, if married, were the legal property of their husbands. The conflict was increased further by women speaking in public, a violation not only of religious and cultural norms for womanhood but also labeled promiscuous when the audience included men.

Anger about the "co-mingling" of races and sexes attracted the attention of pro-slavery Philadelphians and others who perceived these reformers as enemies of the family, religious teachings, and the commonwealth. Angry citizens began gathering outside of Pennsylvania Hall from the time it opened, and the crowd grew larger every day.

Opposite page: *Burning of Pennsylvania Hall*, John Caspar Wild. Hand-colored print. 1838.

Above: *History of Pennsylvania Hall: which was destroyed by a mob, on the 17th of May, 1838. . .*, Authorship attributed to Samuel Webb. Hand-colored print. 1838.

In response to the increasing hostility and anger towards these inclusive gatherings, the building managers requested protection, but the mayor, believing they were responsible for inciting such anger, asked them to end their proceedings. In the event they decided to continue, he asked that the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, the premiere event scheduled that week, restrict its gathering to White women only.

The evening before Pennsylvania Hall was destroyed by arson, 3,000 abolitionists had gathered to hear several well-known antislavery speakers. A mob smashed through windows and broke into the Hall. The reformers remained for another hour while a number of notable abolitionists addressed the audience.

Wednesday night, notices were posted throughout

Lucretia Mott called on the Convention to strengthen their commitment to racial equality, and they passed a resolution that all antislavery work must include Blacks and Whites working together as equals.

Lucretia and James Mott. Daguerreotype. Original photograph by William Langenheim, 1842.

Philadelphia that called on citizens to protect the Constitution and stop the indecent behavior, by force if necessary, that was taking place in Pennsylvania Hall. Lucretia Mott conveyed the mayor's message to the antislavery women on Thursday afternoon. The women refused the request and then left the Hall united, arms linked—Black and White together—protecting each other from their attackers, although, of course, the Black women were at infinitely greater risk. The mob outside grew larger and more belligerent.

By the evening of May 17, the mob had grown to around 17,000 White men. The mayor arrived demanding the keys to the building, telling the crowd to disperse. He then left. Soon after, the mob stormed the building and set it ablaze. Firefighters arrived but were instructed to let it burn; no one was arrested.

Their next target was the home of Lucretia Mott. Refusing to flee and be taken to safety, she waited for the mob with her husband, James, and Quaker schoolteacher and abolitionist Sarah Pugh. Sarah later commented that she had never seen such composure in the face of danger, something Lucretia attributed not to herself but to that of God within. It was only because an abolitionist ally had infiltrated the mob and deliberately misled them away from the Mott's house that they escaped its violence. The mob then went on to burn the Shelter for Colored Orphans, being constructed just several blocks from Pennsylvania Hall, and damage Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, which belonged to a Black congregation.

Southern papers gave high praise to the pro-slavery mob for interrupting the radical and immoral agenda of abolitionists, and at least one Northern paper also blamed the abolitionists for bringing the violence upon themselves by their promiscuous, race-mixing actions, a conclusion with which the official report conducted by the city of Philadelphia agreed.

The burning of Pennsylvania Hall happened within the context of a nation increasingly polarized over slavery. The Abolition Movement gained momentum in the 1830s in conjunction with the increase of abolitionists' publications, reformers, and freed slaves. As the horrors of slavery were exposed, the moral indignation and political opposition to it gained strength, primarily among Northerners. The national tension over slavery, always simmering beneath the surface, was beginning to erupt.

Just six months before the burning of Pennsylvania Hall, a pro-slavery mob in Illinois murdered Presbyterian minister, abolitionist reformer, and newspaper publisher Elijah P. Lovejoy. His murder shocked much of the nation. John Quincy Adams described it "as of an earthquake throughout this country." It was an outrage undoubtedly sparked by not only the brutal ignorance behind his death but also the fact that Lovejoy was White. Like Lovejoy's murder, the burning of Pennsylvania Hall mobilized reformers and accelerated the Abolition Movement, leading to a more deeply divided and polarized nation.

Intended to crush free expression and terrorize reformers, the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall instead cast a spotlight on the savagery of pro-slavery politics and the threat it posed to the rule of law and democracy. Historians mark it as a pivotal moment in awakening Northerners to the urgency of ending slavery.

Just as U.S. President Donald Trump said "nothing" was done wrong on January 6 after a Republican voter confronted him and then described the attack as "a day of love," some eyewitnesses to the burning of Pennsylvania Hall saw the mob another way. One journalist who was "on the spot when the fire began" and was there throughout wrote: "You may call it a mob if you please; but I never saw a more orderly, and more generally well informed class of people brought together on any other occasion where the meeting was called a mob. There was no fighting, no violence to private persons, or property." This is another stunning example of how our beliefs shape what we see and how our versions of history reflect the values and beliefs of those who tell it.

The charred skeleton of Pennsylvania Hall was left untouched by the City of Philadelphia for two years. Although a grim reminder of the danger of using our freedom to speak on behalf of equality, it nonetheless quickly became a monument to the Abolition Movement and a pilgrimage site for reformers.

On the morning following the fire, the American Convention of Antislavery Women met in a local schoolhouse to conclude its work. Some abolitionists had asked them to remove any mention of Black and White women meeting together from their minutes and to reconsider this practice. In response, Lucretia Mott called on the Convention to strengthen their commitment to racial equality, and they passed a resolution that all antislavery work must include Blacks and Whites working together as equals.

In Pennsylvania Hall, these radical beliefs about democracy and equality were not only discussed but practiced, providing an actual glimpse into their possible realization, a realization that remains deeply threatening and under attack today.

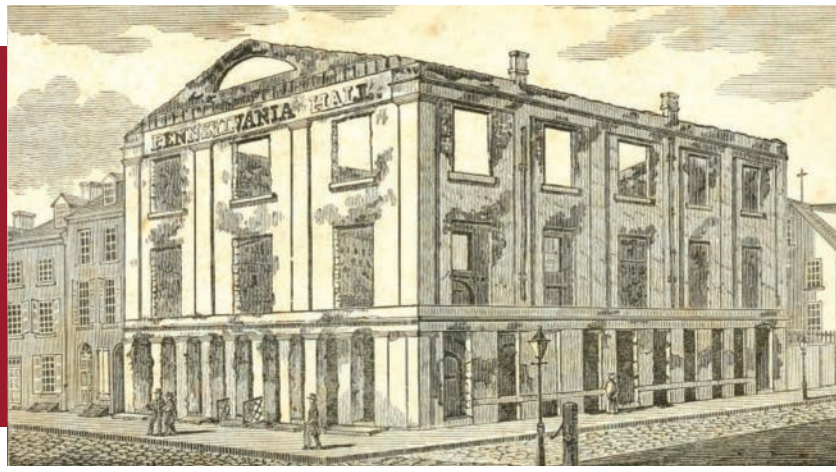
Other abolitionists saw the fire as a backlash to mixing the cause of slavery with women's rights, claiming they were two distinct movements and needed to be kept separate, something Lucretia Mott considered senseless, asking why would anyone expect women to work to free slaves but not themselves?

The progressive politics of equality and inclusion were central to the platform of the American Anti-Slavery Society founded in 1833 by the prominent abolitionist and newspaper publisher William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison advocated an immediate end to slavery, complete racial integration, and full rights of citizenship regardless of race or sex. In Pennsylvania Hall, these radical beliefs about democracy and equality were not only discussed but practiced, providing an actual glimpse into their possible realization, a realization that remains deeply threatening and under attack today.

The current assault on DEI is widespread and unrelenting. Those who continue to defend it are being threatened by the full power of the state. Some historians liken the current effort to crush inclusion and equality to the period following Reconstruction. Adam Sewer has called it the great resegregation.

DEI programs and initiatives spread quickly across the United States, largely in response to the death of George Floyd in May 2020 and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. They were intended to promote the inclusion and success of historically marginalized and excluded groups. Although DEI covers multiple identities, it is often solely associated with race and sex.

DEI also quickly became the rhetorical scapegoat for the nation's problems, vilified as corrupting the practice of reward for individual merit and the principles of equality and democracy. It's claimed that it was DEI that was actually promoting discrimination, especially against White men. The phrase "DEI hire" became a sort of devil term, something unworthy that ought to be avoided and eliminated. It soon became the cause of every



Top: Pennsylvania Hall post-burning. Engraved by Reuben S. Gilbert after work by John Archibald Woodside, Jr. 1838.

Bottom: Illustrations by Jill Flynn.

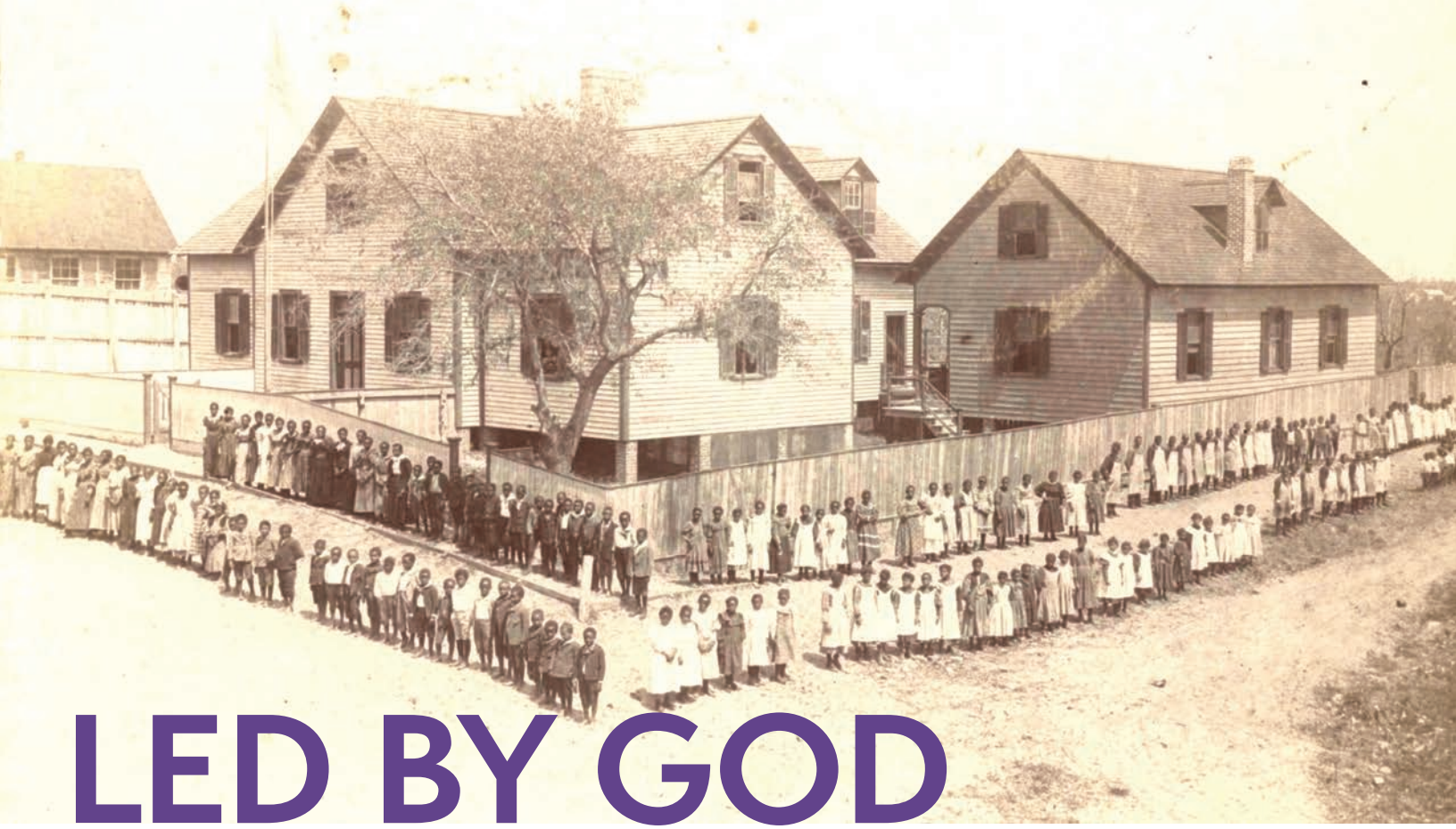
Continues on page 52

PONDERING

His mother isn't mentioned in the parable of the prodigal. No surprises about that. But she's present just the same, pondering her boys, her thoughts like hospitality, warm wind over who they've been and will become. She loves them both so much. She considers their successes and failures and gifts. Their temptations. How different they are. She wonders what home means for a son who journeys, what journey means for a son at home. On uplifted palms she weighs which is most arduous: a long plod from far away to be forgiven, or several heavy steps into joy.

Dora Dueck
Delta, B.C.

Photo by analysis121980



LED BY GOD to HELP EDUCATE FREEDMEN

Lynette Love

THE HISTORY OF LAING SCHOOL

The bold 26-year-old Cornelia Hancock came from rural Southern New Jersey and started Laing School in 1866 in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. At that time, she was probably one of a handful of Quakers in the Charleston area and in the whole state of South Carolina. She came, following her calling by God. A nurse during the Civil War, she had cared for soldiers during some of the biggest, bloodiest battles, including Gettysburg, the Battle of the Wilderness, and the Siege of Petersburg. When she landed in the Charleston area in 1866, one year after the Civil War ended, she probably stood out like a sore thumb. This was at a time when hostilities between the North and South were still very high. But Hancock was not about to be stopped by any attitudes about "Yankees" and "n— teachers."

Quaker organizations were the primary source of funding for Laing School from 1866 to the 1940s. Cornelia Hancock ran Laing School for ten years, working closely with the occupying Union Army and the Freedmen's Bureau stationed in the town for needed resources. She was a prolific letter writer, and from her letters, we learn about Black soldiers stationed in Mount Pleasant and aspects of life during Reconstruction in the

Lynette Love grew up in the South Carolina Lowcountry in the Old Village in Mount Pleasant. She is a graduate of a Laing School, just like her mother and other family members for several generations. She holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from North Carolina Central University, is a lover of history, and has published a Bible study on John 14–17.

area. The 160-plus year history of Laing is very rich and quite dramatic. Hancock was replaced by Abby Munro, a missionary from Rhode Island who ran Laing for 37 years. During her tenure, the school was heavily damaged by a hurricane, and then one year later, it was totally leveled by an earthquake. The Quakers, who never seemed to fail to meet the needs of Laing, financed the construction of a new school.

Photo from National Park Service

The school is named after Henry Laing of Philadelphia. Laing was a Quaker and an abolitionist. He was the treasurer of two Quaker organizations that funded the school (Friends Association for the Aid and Elevation of the Freedmen of Philadelphia; the Pennsylvania Abolition Society). In the 1800s and early 1900s, many of the teachers at "Freedmen Schools," such as Laing, came from the North and were away from their homes and families. Henry Laing took special care of the school's teachers, getting them the books, materials, and resources they requested. When he died in 1899, there was a very heartfelt memoriam in the school's newsletter acknowledging him as a loyal friend and patron of Laing School.

During her 37-year tenure, Abby Munro initiated the *Laing School Visitor*, which was the school's newsletter. Each month, she would list the names of people who had sent supplies or money to the school. The supplies would be shipped in barrels. For example, in November 1899, 36 barrels of clothing, school, and cobbling and dressmaking supplies were sent to Laing. In addition, $382 was sent to support the school. Several of the cash donations given were in the amount of one dollar. Most of these donations came from Quakers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

The eight principals that followed Cornelia and Abby were one group of tough men and women: dedicated, persevering, and wonderful educators. They picked up the baton from those two ladies; never dropping it; and continued to run the race, oftentimes in the face of difficult odds.

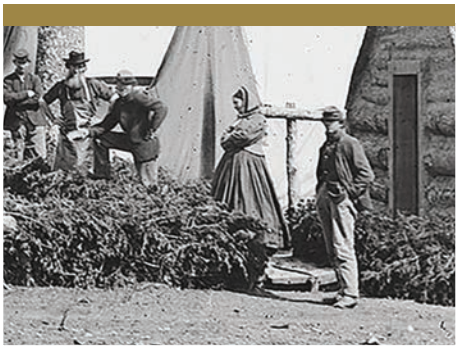


Photo from PA State Archives

One of the more important aspects of Laing's 160-plus year history is the great love and pride that the students and the community felt for this school. It served as a sanctuary for our ancestors as they faced discrimination, disappointment, violence, and seemingly insurmountable challenges. I went to a Laing School, as did my mother and my grandfather. As a child growing up in the Old Village of Mount Pleasant, I remember my mom, aunties, and the elders talking about Laing School. The laughter and fond memories that were a part of those conversations gave you a sense of their great love for the school. Today it is my cousins, my friends, and I who are having those conversations with the joy and the laughter. Our conversations continue to convey the love and the pride people have always felt for a school that was such a great blessing to Mount Pleasant for so many years. Laing School continues today as a nationally recognized, integrated middle school that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

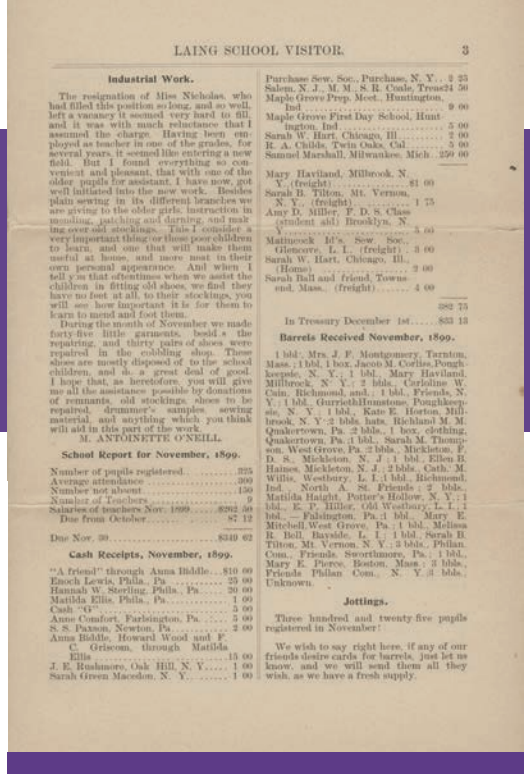
Photo from PA State Archives

Previous page: View of school building at Laing School, taken between 1869–1886. Abby D. Munro Papers 1869–1026. South Carolina Library Collections.

Top: Cornelia Hancock (1840–1927).

Bottom left: Four Civil War nurses present at the fiftieth Gettysburg reunion. From left to right: Clarissa Jones Dye; Cornelia Hancock; Salome Myers Stewart; Mary O. Stevens.

Bottom right: Cornelia Hancock outside a tent at the Virginia hospital encampment in the winter following Gettysburg.



LAING SCHOOL VISITOR. 3

Industrial Work.

The resignation of Miss Nicholas, who had filled this position so long, and so well, left a vacancy it seemed very hard to fill, and it was with much reluctance that I assumed the charge. Having been employed as teacher in one of the grades, for several years, it seemed like entering a new field. But I found everything so convenient and pleasant, that with one of the older pupils for assistant, I have now, got well initiated into the new work. Besides plain sewing in its different branches we are giving to the older girls, instruction in mending, patching and darning, and making over old stockings. This I consider a very important thing for those poor children to learn, and one that will make them useful at home, and more neat in their own personal appearance. And when I tell you that oftentimes when we assist the children in fitting old shoes, we find they have no feet at all, to their stockings, you will see how important it is for them to learn to mend and foot them.

During the month of November we made forty-five little garments, besid s the repairing, and thirty pairs of shoes were repaired in the cobbling shop. These shoes are mostly disposed of to the school children, and th a great deal of good. I hope that, as heretofore, you will give me all the assistance possible by donations of remnants, old stockings, shoes to be repaired, drummer's samples, sewing material, and anything which you think will aid in this part of the work.

M. ANTOINETTE O'NEILL.

School Report for November, 1899.

Number of pupils registered	225
Average attendance	209
Number not absent	136
Number of teachers	9
Salaries of teachers Nov. 1899	$262 50
Due from October	87 12
Due Nov. 30	$349 62

Cash Receipts, November, 1899.

"A friend" through Anna Biddle	$10 00
Enoch Lewis, Phila., Pa	25 00
Hannah W. Sterling, Phila., Pa	20 00
Matilda Ellis, Phila., Pa	1 00
Cash "G"	5 00
Anne Comfort, Farbington, Pa	5 00
S. S. Paxson, Newton, Pa	2 00
Anna Biddle, Howard Wood and F. C. Griscom, through Matilda Ellis	15 00
J. E. Rushmore, Oak Hill, N. Y.	1 00
Sarah Green Macedon, N. Y.	1 00
Purchase Sew. Soc., Purchase, N. Y.	2 25
Salem, N. J., M. M., S. R. Coale, Treas	24 50
Maple Grove Prep. Meet., Huntington, Ind	9 00
Maple Grove First Day School, Huntington, Ind	5 00
Sarah W. Hart, Chicago, Ill	2 00
R. A. Childs, Twin Oaks, Cal	5 00
Samuel Marshall, Milwaukee, Mich	250 00
Mary Haviland, Millbrook, N. Y., (freight)	81 00
Sarah B. Tilton, Mt. Vernon, N. Y., (freight)	1 75
Amy D. Miller, F. D. S. Class (student aid), Brooklyn, N. Y.	5 00
Matlacock H's. Sew. Soc., (Glencore, L. I., (freight)	3 60
Sarah W. Hart, Chicago, Ill., (Home)	2 00
Sarah Ball and friend, Townsend, Mass., (freight)	4 00
	$82 75
In Treasury December 1st	$33 13

Barrels Received November, 1899.

1 bbl., Mrs. J. F. Montgomery, Tarnton, Mass.; 1 bbl. 1 box, Jacob M. Corliss, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.; 1 bbl., Mary Haviland, Millbrook, N. Y.; 2 bbls., Caroline W. Cain, Richmond, and, ; 1 bbl., Friends, N. Y.; 1 bbl., GurnethHouston, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.; 1 bbl., Kate E. Horton, Millbrook, N. Y.; 2 bbls. hats, Richland M. M. Quakertown, Pa.; 2 bbls., 1 box, clothing, Quakertown, Pa.; 1 bbl., Sarah M. Thompson, West Grove, Pa.; 2 bbls., Mickleton, P. D. S., Mickleton, N. J.; 1 bbl., Ellen R. Haines, Mickleton, N. J.; 2 bbls., Cath. M. Willis, Westbury, L. I.; 1 bbl., Richmond, Ind., North A. St. Friends; 2 bbls., Matilda Haight, Potter's Hollow, N. Y.; 1 bbl., E. P. Hiller, Old Westbury, L. I.; 1 bbl., — Fahington, Pa.; 1 bbl., Mary E. Mitchell, West Grove, Pa.; 1 bbl., Melissa R. Bell, Bayside, L. I.; 1 bbl., Sarah B. Tilton, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.; 3 bbls., Philan. Com., Friends, Swortlmore, Pa.; 1 bbl., Mary E. Pierce, Boston, Mass.; 3 bbls., Friends Philan Com., N. Y.; 4 bbls., Unknown.

Jottings.

Three hundred and twenty five pupils registered in November!

We wish to say right here, if any of our friends desire cards for barrels, just let us know, and we will send them all they wish, as we have a fresh supply.

Right: List of contributors to Laing School, November 1899. Abby Munro Papers 1869–1926. South Caroliniana Library Collections, University of South Carolina.

Below (top): Abby Munro, 1846.

Below (bottom): Children in the schoolyard, taken between 1868–1886. Abby Munro Papers 1869–1926. South Caroliniana Library Collections, University of South Carolina.

Photo by George N. Barnard via www.commons.wikimedia.org

Laing's story is unique, but it is also representative of the thousands of freedmen's schools that were built after Emancipation. There was a very powerful movement of Americans who collaborated with the freedmen to build schools. The Quakers were very much a part of that movement. They had a very special relationship with Laing, but they were also involved in building and supporting many other schools, including historically Black colleges and universities.

During the Civil War, 500,000 enslaved people ran away from southern plantations to freedom behind the lines of the Union Army. This flow of people into so-called contraband camps created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The Quakers played an integral role in providing relief for these newly emancipated people in those camps. The Freedmen Schools Movement was born in those contraband camps. Quakers were also fierce, determined abolitionists. After reading about their history, I have concluded that they were led and used by God to help a people gain freedom.

If you search for Cornelia Hancock's name, you will see that she is known and celebrated for nursing soldiers during the Civil War much more than for starting a school in South Carolina. But to the thousands of descendants of the enslaved from the many plantations in Mount Pleasant, the legacy of what she started at Laing matters most. Most of the people from the old Laing School era are gone or are in their 70s. The last class of the old Laing High School graduated in 1970. The challenge now is whether the rich history of this school and other Freedmen Schools will be preserved. ❑

Photo courtesy of Lynette Jackson Love

Mirriam Brown, one of the three female trailblazers who led Laing School over the course of 160 years.

Photo by Alex R.

Barbara Birch

A FINE UNION of SERENITY and ADVENTURE

How Rufus Jones Recovered His Lost Radiance

What I miss most in our present-day Christianity with its confusions and controversies is the spirit of serenity, of gentleness, of simplicity, of tenderness and grace, that love which suffers long and is kind, that depth and power of sacrifice which were so marvelous in the life of Jesus. An ounce of that spirit weighs more than a ton of abstract doctrine.

—Rufus Jones, "Recovery of the Lost Radiance," collected in *The Testimony of the Soul*, 1936

Barbara Birch is the author of Lectio Divina: Revelation and Prophecy *from Quaker Quicks. She is facilitating a Woodbrooke course called Lectio Divina: Reading Rufus Jones With the Heart this autumn. She is a member of Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkeley, Calif., and a board member at Ben Lomond Quaker Center.*

In a somewhat-obscure 1936 published lecture called "Recovery of the Lost Radiance," Rufus Jones, known for his numerous essays on doctrine, played down theology in favor of the gifts of the Spirit that were characteristic of early Christians. In that chapter and in an earlier essay called "Why I Enroll with the Mystics," Jones described a turning point in his life, a time when Spirit restored his lost radiance, renewed his sense of purpose, and revived his vitality. His words remind me of the story of Jesus's transfiguration in Matthew 17: the mundane and ordinary "before" transforms into a Light-filled "after."

Before

Rufus Jones (1863–1948) came of age in the final decades of a Victorian culture characterized by repression and fear. Sigmund Freud, a psychologist and philosopher of the time, thought that the driving

forces of Victorianism were the repression of natural instincts and fear of public shaming because of sexual impropriety, financial failure, or immorality. In addition, the culturally dominant ideas of Christian piety made a moral connection between personal virtue and public success.

Conventional Victorian piety was dualistic, with strong oppositions like the body versus the mind, the human versus the Divine, godly behavior versus sinful behavior, redemption versus damnation, and heaven versus hell. Dualism is associated with disconnection between the self and the body; the body is a contemptible meat puppet that carries the head or the soul from place to place. This perspective is still pervasive today. One Friend I know told me: "My spirit wants liberation from my body. I do not pay any attention to my body; it is a physical shell to be cast off. The older I get, the more I think that Spirit wants to be free from the physical."

As a young man, Jones believed that he had a propensity for sin that, if he gave in to it, would destroy him. He feared his own nature, writing to his fiancée while touring Germany:

> I am afraid of myself . . . for I know [I] am so made that I am as it were a compromise between good and evil, if I should once get on the bobsled of sin I should go down the hill clear to the bottom while on the other hand with a light heart and a bright future I can go up as high as I wish.

Excerpts of many of his letters can be found in Elizabeth Gray Vining's *Friend of Life: The Biography of Rufus Jones*.

By most standards, Jones lived an accomplished life. He taught philosophy at Haverford College from the age of 30 to his retirement in 1934, influencing many young men of the time, including Thomas Kelly. He was a founder of the American Friends Service Committee, and in 1917, he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on their behalf.

Throughout his life, Jones looked healthy, but he suffered from chronic hay fever, indigestion, and eye problems. He went through periods of depression, self-doubt, and burnout exacerbated by cold, rainy weather. In fact, he used weather metaphors to describe his shifting moods, writing around 1915 from Mount Desert Island off the coast of Maine:

> Much harder is the fight with inside weather and more dreary and pitiless are the fogs and east winds of our human spirits. . . . The fight with stubborn inward weather, the battle with the devil in us, if you will, is the best kind of fighting there is to be done and he who has conquered conditions of inner climate has now the best victories which crown men.

Early in his career, a mystical experience revealed Jones's leading to interpret the nature of the soul and its relationship to the Divine. However, the revelation gave Jones little relief from his doubts, discouragements, and fears. His biographer, Elizabeth Gray Vining, concluded that to maintain his lifelong optimism Jones had to learn "to live above the level of moods."

In his 1899 book *Practical Christianity*, published when he was 36 years old, Jones wrote at some length about mind/body dualism:

Jones described his spiritual embodiment as organic mysticism. . . . It brought with it "fresh springs of life, the inauguration of a sense of mission, the flooding of the life with hope and gladness and the conviction, amounting to a certainty, that God is found as an environing and vitalizing Presence."

> In fact, we soon find that it is the man within the visible man that we really care for. It is not the hundred or more avoirdupois pounds of flesh that we love—not the dust wreath—but the SELF that uses this visible form and speaks to us through it.... The body may go to pieces but this spiritual self continues to be what it has made itself by its choices and its loves.

Later, at the age of 51, Jones went through a period of burnout and mental exhaustion, a "nervous breakdown" caused by his feelings of pressure, frustration, and overwork. Jones kept functioning at a high level, but he suffered from psychosomatic symptoms, digestive disturbances, insomnia, and depression. Most disturbing of all was an emotional block now called "selective mutism." Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder in which a certain situation becomes traumatic and triggers an inability to speak. During this time, Jones continued teaching and writing, but he was unable to speak in meeting for worship or in other religious gatherings. It is unclear from Vining's biography how

Photo from commons.wikimedia.org

Portrait of Rufus Matthew Jones, 1917.

At the end of his transfiguration story, Rufus Jones embodied a life-changing feeling of unconditional acceptance: "The sense of belonging—'He is mine and I am His'—makes life feel like a new creation, and the assurance that 'God is for us' helps to eliminate the paralysis of fear as well as of pessimism, or of cynicism."

long the selective mutism went on.

During this low point, Jones accepted an invitation to give a sermon at a nearby church. He was able to desensitize himself enough to overcome his mutism, but the success was, again, hard-won. Before the scheduled sermon, he went to see the church to try his voice and to estimate the number of people that would be there. He couldn't sleep the night before, and later, he couldn't remember how he got to the church. Still, he preached the sermon with a clear voice and felt the appreciation of the audience. He knew that with this accomplishment he had overcome his mutism.

Jones also credited physical labor with helping him overcome his mental exhaustion and burnout. He worked as a volunteer, reconstructing mountain trails. His immersion in nature, his absorption in the flow of a physical task, and the physical exertion and movement itself were helpful in rebuilding his sense of resilience and hope.

Vining used the word "embodiment" when she recounted the continued psychic and emotional toll of maintaining his optimism and energy in the years following:

> Whatever the physical or emotional causes of his condition, it is evident that this man who has been to whole generations the embodiment of optimism, radiant serenity and unbounded energy, did not achieve these gifts without enduring deadly discouragements and dismaying loss of power.

Jones's wholesome embodiment was in many ways nothing more than an emotionally costly charade.

After

In 1922, when Jones was 59 years old, a car knocked him down and left him with a long physical recovery in bed. He wrote the following:

> Gradually I began to discover the amazing power of regeneration which living tissue reveals. Forces as gentle as the fall of snowflakes began to operate as though miracles had not ceased. The split and broken bones were woven together again. The ligaments were stretched back and fastened in their old places. The lacerated muscles are healed by some hidden alchemy. The torn skin and contused flesh were made whole by unseen processes. Every broken fiber was regenerated as though nature's whole business was restoration and renewal.

Crucially, as his body returned to wholeness, his emotions and personality also healed, and he felt a new sense of spiritual embodiment.

> It was a long time before I realized that a still deeper miracle had been taking place within me. I cannot quite date the discovery. But it began to dawn upon me that a "restoration" of another sort had gone on. I seemed in a new way to be liberated from fears and anxieties and worries. I had entered into an unexpected tranquility and peace. More than that, I had gained an immense increase of vitality and "vis viva." Life had become a more joyous and radiant affair than I had ever known.

Jones's new freedom from anxiety gave him confidence. In "Why I Enroll with the Mystics," he wrote that he "no longer cared anything about arguments to prove the reality of God, any more than I did to prove the incomparable worth of the human love which surrounded my life as I lay quietly recovering." After this transformative experience, there were fewer comments about burnout and

Continues on page 52

WHILE WE SLEEP

Last night,
a creature
bounded
down the path and
brushed against
my tent

It shrieked as it ran
and
through the tent screen
I glimpsed
a sky
heavy with stars,

I breathed
pulsing leaves, and
trembling raindrops

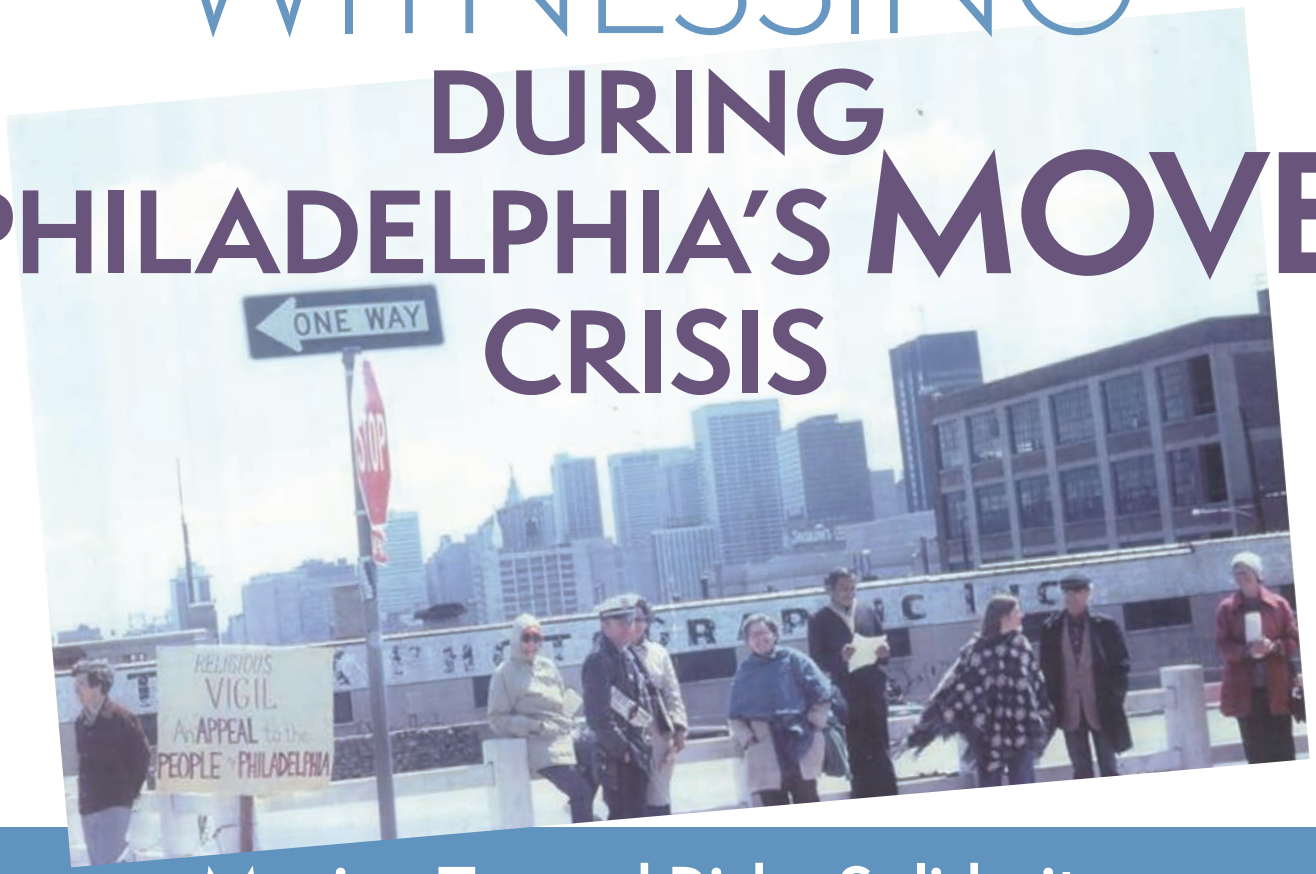
I sensed
creatures
that prowl
the night
while we sleep, and

At daybreak
a baby
called
to the light
glowing
through
tent walls, and
the day
began again

Joan MacIntosh
St. John's, Newfoundland

Photo by Jack Beckerleg on Unsplash

QUAKER WITNESSING DURING PHILADELPHIA'S MOVE CRISIS



Photos from the George Willoughby and Lillian Willoughby papers, courtesy of Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Moving Toward Risky Solidarity

Natalie Fraser and Chioma Ibida

On May 13, 1985, the City of Philadelphia bombed its own residents. Eyewitnesses watched as the Philadelphia police dropped two bombs containing C4 explosives from a state helicopter onto the home of MOVE, a Black liberation and back-to-nature organization. The bomb shattered the windows of nearby cars and buildings, shook the ground for miles, and ignited a fire that engulfed the MOVE row house. As the fire grew hot enough to melt steel—leaping across houses and streets—police commissioner Gregor Sambor instructed firefighters to "let the fire burn." As MOVE members and their children attempted to flee the burning building, they were shot at by police until they retreated. In the end, the City of Philadelphia killed 11 Black people, including five children. Sixty-one homes were destroyed; over 200 people were left homeless; and an entire block of one of Philadelphia's historically Black neighborhoods was left in ruins.

The MOVE massacre was the culmination of rising tensions between the City and MOVE, a conflict that Friends had tried to de-escalate since the 1970s by appealing to Quaker ideas of nonviolence. In this piece, we explore two historical moments in which Quakers aimed to show solidarity with Black liberation: the 1969 Black Manifesto and the 1978 Friendly Presence Vigil.

Natalie Fraser is a recent graduate of Swarthmore College with a bachelor's in medical anthropology. Chioma Ibida is a current student at Swarthmore College, pursuing a bachelor's in psychology, sociology, and anthropology. *Research funding was provided by the Swarthmore Lang Center for Civic Responsibility.*

Our work is grounded in research done at the Swarthmore College Special Collections, where we uncovered, analyzed, and pieced together insights from MOVE's history using the records of the Religious Society of Friends. A critical evaluation of these records shows that Quaker understanding of nonviolence unintentionally helped perpetuate racism, the social structure that makes violence against Black people into a norm.

CALLING FOR RISKY SOLIDARITY

Notably, the limits and apprehensions surrounding racial solidarity weren't unique to Friends' interactions with MOVE's resistance. In 1969, the Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC), a national organization aimed at addressing economic disparities in Black communities, issued the Black Manifesto at a Detroit conference. The manifesto demanded $500 million in reparations from predominantly white religious organizations to address the legacy of slavery and the exploitation of enslaved Black individuals. This bold demand aimed to address racial inequities and financially empower Black communities. The response of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to these demands revealed deep divisions among Quakers. Some Friends recognized the critical need for reparations as a means to right historical wrongs, calling it a necessary "wake up call." Others were unsettled by what they perceived as the coercive and confrontational tone of the demands, calling the manifesto "violent" and "an unacceptable ultimatum." This split revealed an internal struggle within the Philadelphia Quaker community to confront and address the deep-seated racism highlighted by the manifesto. Quakers used the idea of nonviolence to differentiate between groups that were worthy of Quaker funding and those that were not. This discourse characterized the BEDC as violent and therefore unworthy of material support.

Quakers failed to translate their theoretical support for racial solidarity into the material practice of reparations requested by the BEDC. After a year of discussion, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting did not reach a consensus, leaving individual Friends to make their own reparations or, more often, to not make them.

FRIENDLY PRESENCE VIGIL

In 1978, MOVE operated out of a house in the Powelton Village neighborhood in Philadelphia's West Philadelphia section. Approximately 15–20 members of MOVE lived there: growing food, composting, and raising animals in the backyard. Materials from the Swarthmore Special Collections document long-standing conflicts between MOVE and their neighbors, who

The Quakers attempted to address the conflicts surrounding MOVE through their principle of "bearing witness." However, their approach during the MOVE crisis often fell short of the risky solidarity the situation called for.

complained—often rightfully—about the 20 stray dogs housed by MOVE, the smell of feces, and compost and debris in their backyard. MOVE responded by encouraging residents to direct their concerns towards the "real pollution" from "cars, insecticides, [and] food additives." MOVE's practices were disruptive to their neighbors and intentionally so: MOVE understood the disruption of societal norms as key to the destruction of oppressive systems.

City reactions to MOVE occurred within the context of the redevelopment of West Philadelphia. Powelton was marked as a key location for the expansion of Drexel

Opposite Page: The police had barricaded the MOVE house in 1978.

Right: Friendly Presence Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Vigil, corner of Race St. and 33rd St., 1978.

Because Friendly Presence did not name the racial dimensions of the blockade, they quietly normalized the power and violence of racism. They portrayed the vigil as a multiracial coalition, another nod to neutrality.

University property at the expense of low-income Black families. When neighbors complained about MOVE or when the city government cited MOVE for various housing violations, these disputes took place in the context of what we might describe today as "gentrification efforts." The city's selective enforcement of housing violations meant that Black residents were expected to adopt white, middle-class values and norms, or to leave Powelton. As the city, West Philadelphia developers, and their neighborhood allies increasingly portrayed MOVE as a danger to health and safety, they fueled the idea that MOVE needed to be removed by any means necessary.

In March 1978, Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo blockaded the MOVE house and got a court order to shut off water and electricity. As this so-called starvation blockade continued, the Religious Society of Friends, specifically the Friendly Presence Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, initiated a vigil. For 27 days, 24 hours a day, they stood in silent prayer on the corner of Race and 33rd Streets, the edge of the blockade. The banner behind them read "An appeal to the people of Philadelphia." The flyers they handed out said: "Don't kill them, don't starve them, keep working on it." The Friends saw themselves as bearing witness, which they understood as part of Quaker testimony, the lived practice of a commitment to love, truth, and peace.

However, similar to the Friends response to the BEDC, Quaker solidarity efforts once again failed to challenge racial power dynamics. Documents in the archives show the emergence of a specific type of discourse on nonviolence among white Quakers in 1970s and '80s Philadelphia. This discourse was characterized by Quakers failing to name and address the power imbalance between MOVE and the police, and their resulting passivity during instances of police violence.

In the context of the Friendly Presence Working Group, Friends equated nonviolence with third-party neutrality. In a document titled "Suggestions for Maintaining the Vigil," the working group said they were holding the vigil "not as automatic partisans of one side against others, but to a way out of the predicament of which we are a part." In a retrospective memo on the vigil, one of the coordinators, Charles Walker, saw the purpose of the vigil as "peacekeeping" and identified it as "by nature a third-party or nth-party function."

In a meeting between Friends and Powelton neighbors, resident Jean Byall advocated for the starvation blockade on the grounds that it was "nonviolent," saying that the police were "forcing MOVE to come out without bloodshed. They do not have to stay in there and starve." By calling the blockade nonviolent, Byall ignored and silenced what would happen if MOVE did leave: arrests, imprisonment, separation from their children, and the destruction of their home. Unfortunately, Friends' desire to be "neutral" did not take into account these losses posed by the blockade.

Many standing vigil saw their role to be conversing with the police, rather than protesting to them. In his final report on the vigil, Robert Tatman describes "a feeling of amity" between Quakers and police that allowed for "very frank and open discussions on force, nonviolence, and other highly relevant topics." In the handwritten log of the vigil, one participant wrote:

> I am becoming less pro-MOVE and more objective. I feel good talking to police as people. . . . I'm usually down on cops but I've had time here to observe all of the people run the stop signs and be generally inconsiderate

not only to the police but other human beings too. It's sad from all angles.

The entry immediately following reads:

We could see in the distance the demonstration by the Coalition of Black Leaders. . . . [T]hey tried to bring food in to MOVE but +/- 15 people were arrested. Then police w/ horses dispersed the onlookers because the crowd felt positive towards the demonstrators.

These entries are not unusual within the log; there are many accounts of friendly relations between Quakers and police, quickly followed by a description of police action against other groups, particularly those led by Black folk. Onlookers were forcibly dispersed by those on horseback simply for cheering on the Citywide Black Coalition, a Philadelphia-based organization that advocated for human rights and against police brutality. (We were reminded of our own experience at a recent protest in Philadelphia, when police on bicycles began to enclose us, pressing closer and closer until we dispersed.) The vigil log fails to capture the panic and terror of such a moment, precisely because the Friends felt safe, being outside the target of police repression.

Missing here is how Quakers' friendly feelings towards police during the vigil were present as a function of whiteness. Neutrality relies on the white privilege of watching another group experience violence and having the choice to remain a mere bystander because the violence is not being directed at you.

Opposite page: Lillian Willoughby (left) and others at the religious vigil in Philadelphia's Powelton Village near the MOVE house, April or May 1978.

Left: George Lakey (right) participating in the vigil.

In the context of systemic violence, Friends self-identification as both nonviolent and neutral posed a paradox. Every aspect of the conflict between MOVE and the City of Philadelphia was embedded in racism, a social structure that disregards the value of Black life.

MOVE was a neighborhood nuisance, the owners of a home flagged by city administrators for various code violations. At the same time, they were a political organization using disruptive tactics to oppose "the system," which was the concept they used to refer to what we increasingly conceptualize in the United States as white supremacy. In turn, the city's actions were fueled by the racist rhetoric of the "war on crime." On a material level, the city's military-grade response against MOVE was possible because of partnerships between the Philadelphia police and the U.S. military that used increasingly deadly tactics against Black people. The city had a monopoly on violence, which it deployed with overwhelming force against MOVE.

Because Friendly Presence did not name the racial dimensions of the blockade, they quietly normalized the power and violence of racism. They portrayed the vigil as a multiracial coalition, another nod to neutrality.

We can contrast Friends narratives with the Citywide Black Community Coalition, who framed the conflict between MOVE and the City as "part of a continuing history of the flagrant disregard for the human rights of Blacks at home and abroad for over 500 years." Unfortunately, Friends did not incorporate an analysis of race into their interpretation of the blockade, which limited their understanding of power dynamics between the police and MOVE. Simplifying MOVE and the police as two parties in disagreement and failing to evaluate their power imbalance meant preserving a false peace: empty and without real justice.

In the 1970s and '80s, Quaker discourse on nonviolence was characterized by the limits of empathy, the desire to remain neutral in the face of injustice, and its blindness to white supremacy. Accurately apprehending the violence of systemic racism is no small task, yet what the MOVE crisis called for from Quakers was a bolder, riskier solidarity: one that required them to confront and risk their white privilege, standing alongside MOVE with a strong moral stance.

A lived commitment to peace in the world—the heart of Quaker values—may require a loss of material comfort

Continues on page 53

A UNION UNLIKE ANY OTHER

U.S. Quakers' Shifting Views on Same-Sex Marriage

Sharlee DiMenichi

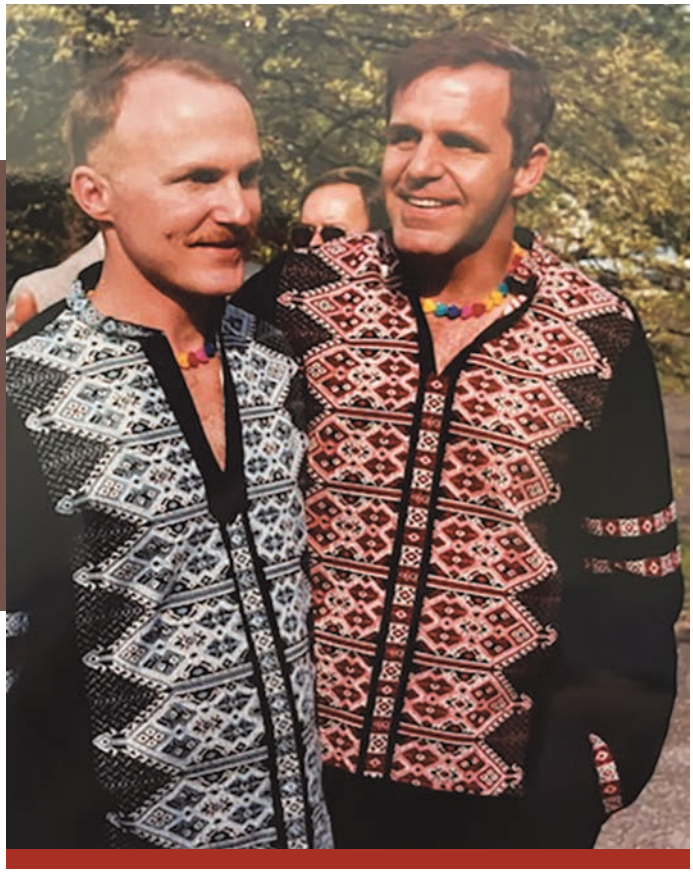


Photo courtesy of Grimes/Kaiser

On a spring Saturday in 1987, Bruce Grimes and Geoffrey Kaiser held a commitment ceremony. The May 2 celebration included 250 guests who gathered to witness the couple express gratitude for their 14-year relationship and pledge to be loving and faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. The men were members of Unami Meeting in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, but the ceremony took place at the nearby Gwynedd Meetinghouse to accommodate the large number of guests. About 200 of those present signed the commitment certificate, which was illustrated by the couple's friend Verlin Miller. Grimes recounted the joyful day in a recent interview with *Friends Journal*. The ceremony took place during a period in U.S. history in which same-sex marriage was not legal.

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case that the Constitution guarantees the right to same-sex marriage. In the majority opinion, justices argued that states which prohibited same-sex marriage violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection under the law by making something illegal for same-sex couples that would not be unlawful for opposite sex couples. They also argued that bans on same-sex marriage violated the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause by inappropriately abridging the rights of same-sex couples. The justices who concurred with the majority opinion described the right to marry as fundamental, "because it supports a two-person union unlike any other in its importance to the committed individuals."

Friends Journal spoke with several U.S. Quakers who discussed affirming same-sex unions in the 1980s and 1990s, leading many meetings to adopt minutes in favor of same-sex marriage before the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that legalized it nationwide.

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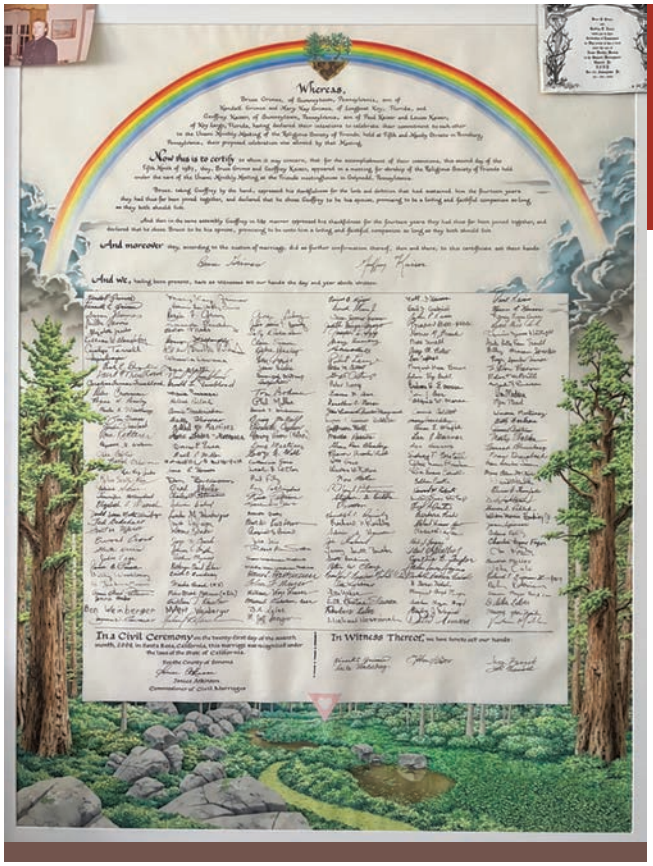


Opposite page: Bruce Grimes (blue shirt) and Geoffrey Kaiser (red shirt) in their wedding shirts.

Left: Bruce Grimes and Geoffrey Kaiser's marriage certificate, with approximately 200 signatures. The ceremony took place on May 2, 1987.

Friends in Adelphi (Md.) Meeting went through a long discernment process that culminated with adopting a minute in 1991 in support of same-sex marriage. Longtime attender Mary Leonard said the meeting discussed the issue "[a]wkwardly, with lots of stumbles, retreats." It took four years for Friends in the meeting to complete the process of discernment. Leonard said it felt more like ten years. In retrospect, she reflected that it took Quakers a full century to disavow enslaving people.

Leonard had been involved in consciousness raising about LGBTQ issues and thought the meeting needed this type of activity. There were many lesbians in the meeting, but their sexual orientation was not widely known in the congregation, according to Leonard.

Adelphi Meeting's Ministry and Worship Committee and its Pastoral Care Committee both discussed same-sex marriage while gathering information and resources, according to member June Confer. The committees then reported to business meeting. Friends held second-hour education programs, worship sharing, and threshing sessions, Confer recalled. The meeting then considered the proposed minute, which many members and attenders supported.

Some heterosexual Friends told gay and lesbian Quakers that they were happy to have them in the meeting, but that same-sex marriage was against the Bible, Leonard recalled. An older lifelong Quaker in Adelphi Meeting stated that he had grown up believing that homosexual people were sinners. Through the process of discernment, the Friend discovered that some of his longtime Friends were homosexual, Confer recalled.

"He could, therefore, no longer paint the group with a broad brush and must reflect on his understanding," Confer said. The Friend asked members and attenders to approve the minute, which the meeting did at the next meeting for worship for business, according to Confer.

Friends from other meetings recalled conversations in their meetings before the meeting adopted a minute that supported same-sex marriage. Georgia Lord began attending began attending Atlanta (Ga.) Meeting with her husband in 1981. Atlanta Meeting is part of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA). In the 1980s members of SAYMA were discussing same-sex marriage at a time when the yearly meeting was working on a revision of its *Faith and Practice*, which had a section on marriage. Friends in SAYMA were also discussing other questions of sexual morality, such as whether it was acceptable for couples to cohabit without marrying.

SAYMA asked its constituent Friends meetings to comment on Faith and Practice. Atlanta Meeting had a lot of support for same-sex marriage but had not reached consensus on the matter at the time.

In a business meeting for worship at Atlanta Meeting, a number of people explained that their image of marriage was exclusively a relationship between only one man and only one woman, Lord recalled. The majority of the meeting supported same-sex marriage. One couple in the meeting who had objected to same-sex marriage moved away, Lord explained.

One person who described same-sex marriage as "fornication" was still part of Atlanta Meeting at the time Friends were considering the minute, according to Lord. He said a minute in support of same-sex marriage would lead to his leaving the meeting. His wife did not want to leave, and he eventually returned to the community. He continues

Photo by Emily Richardson

Macci Schmidt (left) and Becky Jones (right) married on July 31, 2004.

to have concerns about same-sex marriage. Some heterosexual couples in the meeting had commitment ceremonies instead of getting married to express solidarity with same-sex couples, Lord noted.

Founded in 1991, Atlanta Friends School was a new school during the period when members and attenders of the meeting were discussing same-sex marriage. The school was not under the care of the meeting, but many people who enrolled their children in the school, which had a policy of non-discrimination against gay and lesbian people, also brought their children to Atlanta Meeting. Several lesbian couples with children attended the meeting; meeting these couples and their children familiarized heterosexual Friends with same-sex partnerships.

"After a couple of years, it was like, 'They sure look like families,'" said Lord.

Ann Arbor (Mich.) Meeting's Committee on Gay and Lesbian Concerns began in 1987. Committee members got to know each other while planning information sessions and inviting Friends in the meeting to discuss issues, beliefs, and feelings about same-sex marriage, according to member Jan Wright.

"People were all over the map," said Wright, noting that some people expressed the belief that the purpose of marriage is to procreate and raise children. Wright, who married at age 54 and did not consider procreation the purpose of her marriage, found this belief off-putting.

Other Friends objected to same-sex sexual activity. One Friend suggested the meeting should focus on social justice issues rather than on same-sex marriage, Wright recalled. Wright considered same-sex marriage an important social justice issue. Some Friends believed that marriage is, by definition, only between a man and a woman. Through their discernment process, Friends learned about varying perspectives, addressed misperceptions about lesbians and gay men, and changed their thinking, according to Wright.

In their consideration of the minute, Friends also learned about the importance of personal sharing, deeper community, and closeness, according to Claire Tinkerhess.

Members of the meeting believed that equality meant a single standard should apply to all couples, regardless of the partners' genders, Wright explained. Worshipers believed there is that of God in everyone. Friends believed that couples thrive in supportive communities that encourage their love. Couples can develop their own vows and define their own relationships, according to Wright.

"Probably simplicity was why this got passed," Wright said of the approved minute. They followed the example of Red Cedar Meeting in Lansing, Michigan, and also used printed resources from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. "We didn't have to reinvent the wheel," Wright said.

Ann Arbor Meeting had a screening of an educational film and invited an openly gay staff member from American Friends Service Committee to share his experiences. The difficult process of considering the minute concluded in 1992, Wright explained. One person stood aside; another individual resigned his membership.

In the 1990s, about a third of the members of Northampton (Mass.) Meeting were lesbians, and the community had supported lesbian and gay rights from

the beginning of its existence, according to David Foster, who was active in the meeting in that decade. Northampton Meeting was a preparative meeting under the care of Mt. Toby Meeting in Leverett, Massachusetts. Weddings are typically held under the care of the parent meeting in these situations. As a preparative meeting, Northampton Meeting adopted a minute saying the community would hold in its care the marriages of same-sex couples. The meeting spent most of a year drafting and seasoning the minute, Foster noted. When Northampton Meeting became its own monthly meeting in the mid-1990s, it affirmed the previous minute, according to Foster. Affirming gay and lesbian relationships came naturally to the community.

"It just seemed to be in the meeting's DNA," Foster said.

A lesbian couple who had married under the care of the meeting believed the minute did not include enough concrete actions that meeting members should take to support same-sex couples, according to Foster.

"To go that route was to get ahead of our leading," said Foster of adding concrete actions to take.

The first two weddings that took place within the Northampton Meeting community were of same-sex couples, even though such ceremonies could not yet be performed legally, according to member Becky Jones.

When the same-sex couples submitted their marriage requests to the preparative meeting in 1992, members debated whether to bypass asking that the relationships come under the care of its parent meeting, Mt. Toby, as they would normally do for a marriage request since they were not yet their own monthly meeting.

"We [thought about] simply conducting the marriages under the care of Northampton Friends Preparative Meeting since they weren't legal marriages," Jones said. "We opted for marriage under the care of Mt. Toby because we wanted to treat them as we would have treated a request for a legal (heterosexual) marriage."

In 1996, two years after Northampton became an independent monthly meeting and, five years after it began as a worship group, its members adopted a minute on sexual orientation, according to Jones. The minute states, in part:

> We bring our whole selves to our relationship with the Divine and find that sexuality within a loving relationship, whether homosexual or heterosexual, has the potential to bring us closer to God. We as a Meeting feel that we have been blessed by the presence and participation of lesbians, gays and bisexuals as individuals and, for some, as partners in same sex couples.

Foster also noted that the meeting sought to offer guidance to other meetings that were considering adopting same-sex marriage minutes.

After Friends at Beacon Hill Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, adopted a minute in 1988 supporting same-sex marriage, members wanted to support other meetings considering similar actions, according to Beth Nagy. The meeting sent the minute to Salem Quarterly Meeting as well as to all the Friends meetings in the Salem Quarter. Three or four meetings reached out to Friends at Beacon Hill.

A committee of about six Beacon Hill Friends visited various meetings to support discussions of same-sex marriage minutes. Members from Beacon Hill shared personal stories and discussed the process of adopting the minute. One discussion format that Nagy particularly appreciated was handing out index cards, each of which had a question about same-sex marriage to be answered anonymously. The cards were shuffled and passed out to the group. The process sparked additional questions and discussions.

Friends from other meetings in the quarter expressed reservations about meetings getting into legal trouble for allowing marriages that were not legal, Nagy recalled.

"There's a general fear of changing big norms," Nagy said.

In the late 1990s, Beacon Hill Meeting got an invitation to work with the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry, which was publicly advocating legal same-sex marriages. Nagy was the meeting representative to the coalition. Before semi-retiring, Nagy worked to prevent domestic violence and rape. She felt motivated to promote nonviolent and loving marriages and was distressed that healthy same-sex marriages were not legal.

"Here's couples who are loving each other, and they can't get married. This is ridiculous," Nagy said.

The *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision took place after many meetings had already adopted same-sex marriage minutes. When the Supreme Court decided that case, some same-sex couples in Ann Arbor Meeting became legally married, Tinkerhess recalled.

Friends in Atlanta Meeting celebrated the decision with a meeting for worship distinguished by decorations and singing, Lord noted. The ruling, however, did not sway the opinions of Friends in the meeting.

"By that point, it was a non-issue for us," Lord said. ❑

MY DAUGHTER AT TWELVE

**She searches the crowd at the school carnival,
seeking ramps that reach the merry-go-round's edge.**

**With a move of her fingers, she signs *thank you* to the attendant.
Now all the prizes from her skillful dart throws**

**jingle in her lap, tucked beside her knapsack.
Later, she draws SpongeBob with her stylus,**

**her tablet a map of her dreams. She asks why
people stare—why her wheelchair draws whispers.**

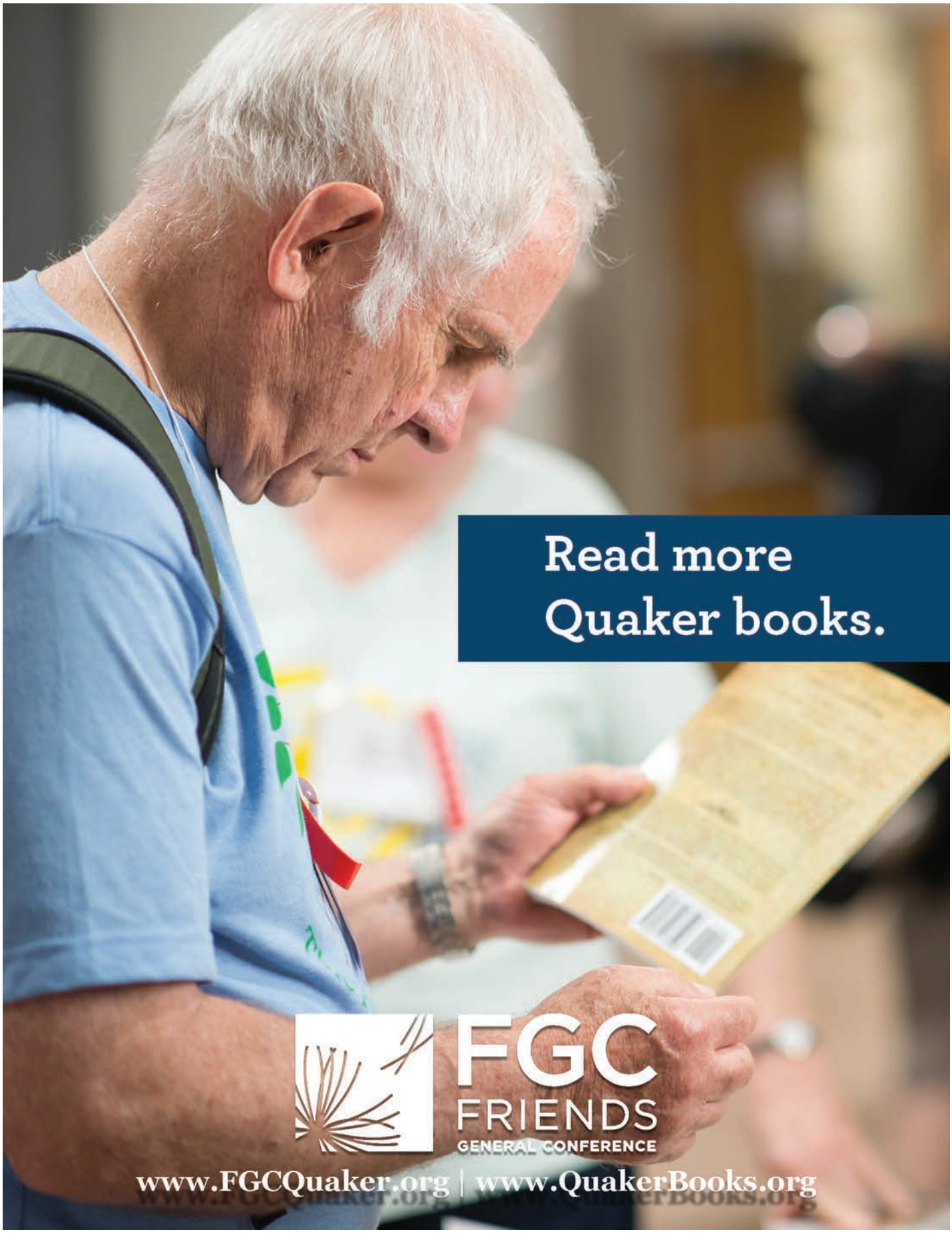
***Please stop*. She begs me not to call the principal:
she heard the talk was just teasing, nothing more.**

**She turns wishes into beautiful creations,
making writing and art into small wonders.**

**Oh my ingenious, gentle girl. I brush the tears off your cheek yet
it still carries the warmth of your sunrise smile.**

Diem Okoye
Toronto, Ontario

Photo by Yulia Zavalishina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A Wellspring of Goodwill

An Interview with Tina Visscher on Her Leading to Welcome Migrants in Montana

SHARLEE DIMENICHI

Bienvenidos is a Montana-based organization that partners Spanish-speaking families, many of them from Honduras and Venezuela, with mentors who listen to their priorities and help them address their needs. The word *bienvenidos* is Spanish for "welcome." *Friends Journal* staff writer Sharlee DiMenichi talked with one of the founders, Tina Visscher, a member of Montana Gathering of Friends Meeting, who served as the first director of Bienvenidos from February 2020 through May 2024. The interview has been lightly edited.

***Sharlee DiMenichi:** Please give an overview of your role in Bienvenidos and explain how it got started.*
Tina Visscher: Bozeman Worship Group is a small worship group under the care of Montana Gathering of Friends Meeting. There were probably five people there for a business meeting in fall of 2019, and one of the members said, "I would really like to do something locally, social-justice wise." About three days later, we heard about the influx of immigrants into the Bozeman community.

The local school district's English-learner coordinator, Ellen Guettler, met with us and was just overwhelmed. Suddenly there were 75 kids that spoke Spanish. She was the coordinator of the program, but nobody else was helping her. The new arrivals were wearing flip flops and had no winter clothing. We said, "Great, we'll find some winter clothing." Two other volunteers (Heather Jackson and Peter Husby) and I hustled around all these thrift stores and bought jackets and mittens. It had already started snowing in October.

We set up 17 bags, and my husband, Tim, delivered them all. I thought maybe a mentorship program would be good to help people adjust to living in the community. In February 2020 the mentorship program began. We matched, I think, eight families at first. I made three-ring resource binders for the mentors—very old school.

The COVID shutdown happened, but we learned about Zoom. We kept training volunteers and kept adding families. I think it's up to like 55 families now. I was the director. For a long time, I was doing the orientations, doing the match meetings, all of the things early on. Then another volunteer came on board and started helping. Then a small group of us decided to become a nonprofit. We now have a full-time director who started a year ago.

***SD:** When you were the director were you volunteering or were you on staff?*
TV: I was a volunteer. There was no money to pay for a staff director's position. I had a zippered bank envelope and occasionally people would give me cash. If a volunteer had an emergency, I would give them cash from the envelope.

Once we became a nonprofit, we kept bringing more volunteers in and matching more families. We got a grant to hire a resource coordinator in Big Sky. We now have a program manager and a director. It's been meteoric, wow. The chair of the board, Mayra Del Carmen, is a Hispanic woman from California, the daughter of a farm worker and a meat packer. She's a new professor at Montana State University. The director, Vanessa Zamora, is from Colombia.

***SD:** When you volunteered as the director, what was a typical day of that work like for you?*
TV: One of the things we did was get together all the organizations and agencies in town. Every two weeks we met as the Migrant Community Coordination Group to solve problems and to put pressure on organizations to have language access systems that work.

The hospital was probably the biggest organization to shift; that has grown and expanded. Before our work, people were getting instructions for surgery, the instructions of how you take care of yourself, in English only. Now we also have language access in the courts. We have it at all the clinics. At the beginning, nobody could make a phone call because there would be no way for them to get an interpreter.

Part of my job would be reaching out to the homeless shelter, putting pressure on them—they weren't taking people because they couldn't do a background check. Then they figured out if they just got references on the family from an organization that had known them for at least a month, they would start taking them.

I'm a clinical social worker. I have a background both in the big and the individual points of view. So that was the big part. The little part was talking to new volunteers and getting together the orientations. About a year ago we hired a consultant to help us with cultural appropriateness and an empowerment basis, so that we're not creating dependency. I would go on visits with my husband, who is fluent in Spanish.

Photo courtesy of Bienvenidos

Photo by David Riquelme

Right: Tina Visscher at a Bienvenidos family summer picnic in 2024.

Opposite page: Christmas cookie decorating with children from the mentor program.

I would take kids to the library. I took two kids to the symphony.

SD: Which Quaker values guided the formation of the organization?
TV: Certainly there's that of God in everyone. Advocacy in the community for equality, equal access, and respect. A lot of people have commented that it was an opportunity to actually do something. I'm a social worker and a Quaker. I know the value of real, long-term relationships and action.

SD: What qualities should mentors have?
TV: I can tell you what I don't look for: people who want to come in, take over, and take control. We really fostered listening and following the lead of the family. We emphasize the importance of developing relationships, listening, and being curious.

The other thing that I tried to impart to the mentors was to tell the families about yourself. This is not a one-sided relationship; it's not a case manager sent out from an agency. You are a friend and neighbor. The program is called the partner program. We try to keep that in mind.

Everything was done in teams. Each mentor was partnered with another mentor. So part of the experience was being able to work together and to reach out for help when you're feeling overwhelmed, powerless, or anxious. There was a legal team and an immigration team—all the things were teams all along. Teamwork was a core value.

SD: How many Quakers have been involved in the organization over the years?
TV: Heather Jackson and I were the founders, along with a few other non-Quakers. Peter Husby was also instrumental. Three Quakers have been mentors.

SD: How have the needs and concerns of immigrant families changed under the current presidential administration?
TV: Because I worked with kids and families, my first thought was, If the parents are deported, what's going to happen? The school district has almost 600 Spanish-speaking students now. There were 75 when we started, wow. My husband and I have mentored a woman who has six kids, and she has an order of removal. Three of them are U.S. citizens, but what if she gets deported? These are people we know really, really well.

The American Civil Liberties Union came out with some recommendations right away for family preparedness plans. All through last fall, we were working on getting that information out to families and training mentors to sit down with families to appoint guardians. They have to tell their kids what to do if they get home from school and nobody's here or if the parents don't get home from work. That's just a terrible, heartbreaking thing. Also you've got little kids who you can't explain it to. So that was my biggest focus. We got the information out to the organizations and agencies that were asking for help and guidance from us. I'm going to start talking to family services about maybe training some families to be foster parents.

SD: How would you describe the spiritual aspect of this work?
TV: It felt like a joy, a leading, and a passion the whole time. For the first few years, we were under the care of my monthly meeting, which is Montana Gathering of Friends Monthly Meeting. We had a lot of donations coming in from Quakers at first. We were under their care, so I was reporting to them, and then when it became a nonprofit, in November 2021, it kind of moved out of Quaker hands.

The growth of it, the response of the community, the time period—during COVID and the first Trump presidency—it was just very heartening to see people giving of themselves and wanting to volunteer.

It is important to realize that immigrants are really resilient. They will solve their own problems. You don't need to pop in and be the White rescuer. I had studied a lot about White privilege. White people can know that they do have White privilege and they do have power, instead of trying to pretend they don't. Bienvenidos put into action a lot of other parts of my social worker self. So for me, personally, it was really a growth experience. I felt both blessed by it, but also in some deep sense, not really responsible for it. I could not have done this if this wellspring of goodwill had not swept along with it.

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for Friends Journal. *The Spotlight column highlights notable small-scale works or ministry being carried out by individual Friends and meetings. Learn more and submit ideas at* Friendsjournal.org/spotlight.

New for 2025, the Bible Study column runs four times a year in the February, May, August, and November issues. We welcome your submissions and comments at *Friendsjournal.org/bible-study*.

Blessed Are the Meek

JUDITH INSKEEP

> Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
>
> **Matthew 5:5 (RSV)**

***The Sermon on the Mount* by Carl Bloch, 1877. Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle.**

This well-known passage is one of the nine Beatitudes, or blessings, recounted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5. How does the word *meek* sound to you? Overly submissive? Docile, compliant, or spiritless? That's what it suggests to me.

There is some virtue in meekness. I think of a piece I once learned in the chorus where I sang. It was based on the short story "Bontshe Shvayg" ("Bontshe the Silent") by classic Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz about a man called Bontshe, who was meek, very meek. Everyone disrespected him and treated him like someone who didn't matter in the least. He bore it all with great patience, never responding with anger or lashing out at anyone. When he died, he was taken up to Heaven and told that he could ask for anything he wanted—anything, and it would be given to him. He thought for a while, and then said, "I would like to have every day, for breakfast, a hot roll with fresh butter." It's a touching story, and it's reassuring that he didn't ask for 50 gold talents, but still, does one really want to be *that* meek?

Looking back at my childhood, I think I was raised to be meek (although I don't recall that word being used): do as you're told; don't contradict or interrupt your elders; be careful about expressing your opinion. When I grew up and wanted to assert myself more, I probably went too far in the other direction and expressed some opinions that were uncharitable, not to say hurtful. I came to understand that one must find balance. I didn't find it in time, though, to be an effective parent; speaking with "I really mean it" firmness just didn't come naturally. My son was sometimes difficult to control, and I struggled to discipline him. When I asked Jean, a Friend from meeting, to take him for one afternoon while I did something else, she reported back that he had tried to run up the side of the dam (it was slanted) and that she had to speak to him "quite severely." It was hard for me to imagine seemingly mild-mannered Jean speaking severely, but she had successfully raised three children, so she must have known how to do it!

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is often thought of as meek. In the Middle English carol "Lullay, mine liking," which portrays an encounter with the Nativity scene, angels sing to baby Jesus and Mary: "Blessed be thou, and so be she, that is so meek and mild."

In *Wisdom's Daughters: Stories of Women around Jesus*, Quaker theologian Elizabeth G. Watson presents Mary as a thinking person who has some education, and she points to an empowering definition of the term "virgin" (from feminist scholar Christine Downing): a woman whose "center is in herself." Watson elaborates: "She is not dependent on men for her identity. We have hints that Mary was such a woman." Indeed, Mary did wonder why the angel Gabriel would address "someone like me," but he was convincing, so she said, "Let it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38), and found the strength to go forward in spite of the local gossip.

The Message version's rendering of "Blessed are the meek" is quite different. Jesus says to his hearers: "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought."

What do we long for that can't be bought? Love, affection, friendship, consideration, positive feelings. I think we all realize that money, power, control, privilege, authority, and impressive achievements do not inspire these emotions, whether we can honestly acknowledge it or not.

A French version of the Bible offers "Blessed are the debonair," a word that derives from the phrase *de bonne aire*, literally "of good air." That seems apt too. To me, the word suggests confident and gracious, that is, confident of God's love and graciously extending that love to others.

The New English Bible reads: "How blest are those of a gentle spirit; they shall have the earth for their possession." The term "gentle"

is included in *The American Heritage Dictionary* definition of *meek*, as well as "showing patience and humility."

The Interpreter's Bible from United Methodist Publishing specifies that the Greek word for *meek* (πραύς or praus) means not sad resignation but "good will toward men and reverent obedience toward God." One can be "humble in the strength of reverence," focused on duties rather than rights, not insisting on one's place in the sun but being content to walk in God's shadow. The earth will be inherited by the children of God's own spirit, and the reward cannot be reckoned in dollars and cents.

When we study the Bible, we choose what has meaning for us; I believe that's the best way to understand it, rather than just accepting someone else's interpretation. I like what American theologian Frederick Buechner said about interpretation in his memoir *Now and Then*:

> If you have to choose between words that mean more than what you have experienced and words that mean less, choose the ones that mean less because that way you leave room for your hearers to move around in and for yourself to move around in too.

We need to have confidence that whatever we do in the right spirit will somehow be the right thing.

Discussion Questions

- What does the word *meek* in Jesus's blessing mean to you?
- Do you think you are, or might be, a "proud owner of everything that can't be bought"?
- How is it possible to be "humble in the strength of reverence"? What would that look like?

Judith Inskeep is a member of Gwynedd (Pa.) Meeting who grew up in Friends Meeting of Washington (D.C.). She has volunteered in Mexico with American Friends Service Committee, served in the Peace Corps in Peru, and worked at the Quaker United Nations Office.

REFLECTION

Nantucket Bones: My Quaker Identity Considered

All photos by the author

A.V. CROFTS

We are poured out like water. Who
will dance
The mast-lashed master of Leviathans
Up from this field of Quakers in their
unstoned graves?

—*Robert Lowell, "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket"*

In the summer of 2023, a few years past my own half century, I visited Nantucket for the first time. Seated on the upper deck of the passenger ferry near the prow, I watched the island sharpen from smudge to a slice as we approached the harbor. Down the gangplank and into the arms of friends who would introduce me to the island's late summer charms: riding bikes to catch the sunrise over the ocean with my bare feet dug into the cold sand; afternoon naps on the beach in canopied comfort from the sun; and outdoor showers once back at the house to wash off the sea salt, the wood slick beneath my feet and soft to the touch, the sky above blue, like Nantucket's ubiquitous hydrangeas.

As I navigate middle age (which arrived much as Nantucket emerged for me from the misted horizon on the ferry: a fuzzy sense of anticipation soon replaced with a crisp reality), days such as these on the island place me back in a suspended childhood of stretched time, where I licked sticky fingers from melting ice cream cones and slept deeply while curled in a question mark. Nantucket stills and reforms me. The trees outside my bedroom window rustled their reminder to pay greater attention in a language I can hear clearest when freed of my thieving quotidian distractions.

My emancipation afforded time for contemplation of my surroundings and myself. The titans of industry on Nantucket today are no longer my ancestral Quaker whalers. Instead, the steady drone of private jets overhead and the hum of electric vehicles navigating the cobblestones of the historic downtown point to a new kind of wealth and power. On my bike, I pedaled past weathered, shingled cottages and stately historic homes with bronze door knockers on my way to the last-standing meetinghouse, dating from 1838. There I peered in a window at the unadorned wooden benches and wondered: *Where are the Quakers today?*

Over 300 years ago, the Society of Friends was the first non-Native religious group to organize on the island (the Wampanoag Native Americans, who had been living there for thousands of years, had their own spiritual practices). A series of traveling Quaker missionaries visited Nantucket in the early 1700s and ministered to the residents there, including respected businesswoman Mary Coffin Starbuck, who by that time had lived on the island nearly 40 years, being part of the earliest wave of colonial settlers. She became the first convinced Nantucket Quaker, founding the Nantucket Meeting in 1708. The "great Mary Starbuck" catalyzed a mass conversion, the likes of which have never been replicated, and within 50 years, the vast majority of Nantucket's residents gathered in silence on Sundays.

Factions and friction formed within the Nantucket Quaker community during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, which resulted in competing sects and a steep decline in the faithful. By the century of my birth, no Quakers were believed to remain on the island.

Over the intervening decades, Quakers have slowly returned. The historic meetinghouse on Fair Street now boasts a summer First-day service, and its annexed research archive welcomes guests who seek knowledge over spiritual revelation. As I consider these signs of renewal, I reflect on the subtext to my original question and ask myself: *What kind of Quaker am I today?*

I am a descendant of New England Quakers and a distant cousin to the evangelist Mary Coffin Starbuck. My biological link is illustrated in a collection of yellowing genealogical research documents painstakingly compiled by my late maternal great-aunt and corroborated in a transcribed oral history of her recorded when she was in her 80s. I discovered this trove after yanking open an antique bureau drawer once back on the mainland, my family history stowed in our Maine farmhouse like a collection of socks.

My Quaker family cemetery in Casco, Maine, sits beneath an oak tree of generous canopy, a quarter mile down Quaker Ridge Road and an 1814 meetinghouse built before Maine became a state. A family lichen-licked headstone stands above modest individual stone markers flush with the ground: my grandparents and other kin collect acorns every autumn, which are swept away each spring.

Is Quakerism in the United States

in that autumnal phase of life or in spring? Indeed, attendance is shrinking at many U.S. meetings, but there are also signs of growth at meetings that have successfully welcomed young families and other seekers to their benches. I have not attended a monthly meeting with regularity as an adult, so statistically, I am part of the attrition. Personally, Quakerism feels both urgent and vital. From lawsuits against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to my own equanimity, Quaker silent worship and the history of individual ministry and activism are necessary ballast in these rough waters.

I was raised Quaker, my faith the equivalent of a native tongue. There is no memory of learning the language, just the fact of fluency. Quaker core values have guided my life at every stage, but in some ways I've uncoupled my faith and practice. What do I gain from worship in community? What have I missed by its absence?

Attendance at Quaker Ridge Meetinghouse has not been continuous since 1814, but my great-aunt, who took care to document family genealogy, began to convene occasional summer worship in 1956. When I was a young child she secured historic designation status for the simple, unheated clapboard building. My recent move to Maine affords me proximity, and now my life includes a season of worship. Attendee numbers are modest but include Quakers beyond my family members. I could see my breath last November in our final meeting for worship before closing for the winter: the work of my lungs made visible.

Opposite page: Gravestones at the Quaker Burial Ground in Nantucket.

This page: The entrance (bottom) and interior (above) of the Friends Meeting House at 7 Fair Street, built in 1838.

On my return to Nantucket in the summer of 2024, I was determined to visit graves as a pilgrimage of ancestor-worship and grave-sweeping. However, in keeping with the tenets of simplicity and rejection of idols, the historic Quaker cemetery, which encompasses acres of Nantucket prime real estate, boasts only a few headstones the color of bleached whalebones. The spectral markers, like stray teeth scattered in a corner of the rolling expanse dotted by a few stubborn trees, represent the schism that undid the Quaker faith on Nantucket with a similar totality as its initial adoption. I am walking across more than bones; I am walking across an undoing.

Just because something is invisible, however, does not deny its existence; faith in the Divine is an exercise in this very truth. Bones are a form of history; bones are a human architecture; bones are a way to describe an essential knowledge. These foundational qualities—my past, my body, my mind—are all informed by Quakerism and will continue to be so into the future.

Anita Verna Crofts is a member of Newtown (Pa.) Meeting in Bucks County, and between May and November attends the historic Quaker Ridge Meetinghouse in Casco, Maine, where Quakers have gathered in silence for over 200 years. She teaches at the University of Washington and at Maine Media.

As effects ripple out, Quakers react to devastating USAID cuts

By Sharlee DiMenichi

U.S. Agency for International Development aid arrives aboard a U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules at the Yangon International airport in Burma.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt Andres Alcaraz

On January 20, President Donald Trump called for a three-month review of international aid programs which led to cutting $54 billion, or 90 percent, from the budget of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Associated Press reported.

Quakers who worked for international development organizations have lost jobs. Residents of developing countries have lost access to lifesaving medicine, education, and funding.

One Friend who lost work due to the cuts expressed particular concern about how fast the defunding happened. Although people who work in the international assistance sector often intend to have residents of developing countries eventually take over their work, the process of doing so takes much longer than the several days over which the cuts were announced, according to Spee Braun, a management consultant in international development and humanitarian aid who has worked for a variety of organizations, including Save the Children. Staff of international organizations did not have time to hand off their work to local colleagues.

"We are experts in our field at working ourselves out of a job," said Braun, who is a member of Old Chatham (N.Y.) Meeting. She lives in Quaker Intentional Village–Canaan in Columbia County, N.Y.

Braun estimates that at least 50,000 U.S. employees lost their jobs due to the defunding.

The clients she consults with are cutting staff and programs. One organization was owed $2 billion for past work done, and only a portion of that has been paid out. She knows a person who submitted an invoice for $35,000 and the organization said it could not pay for the work.

On March 10, a federal judge ordered the administration to pay for work that was already funded by Congress but did not require existing contracts to continue, Reuters reported.

Former Trump advisor, billionaire Elon Musk, who headed the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) until his departure in May, described international aid spending as wasteful. Musk said he considered USAID "beyond repair," *The Guardian* reported.

Labels such as "fraud, waste, and abuse" have negatively affected employees' emotional well-being, Braun explained.

"It's devastating psychologically," said Braun, who holds a master's degree in international affairs and was formerly proficient in Arabic.

International aid employees from the United States collaborated with professionals in developing countries. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost work as the effects of the cuts ripple out, estimates Ann Hendrix-Jenkins, who was a consultant working with USAID's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance.

"A lot of those people are the main breadwinner for their extended families," said Hendrix-Jenkins, an attender at Hammersmith Meeting in London, UK.

Hendrix-Jenkins still consults with the Hunger Project, which did not receive funding from the U.S. government.

Programs in developing countries have been closed due to funding cuts. Three thousand Kenyan farmers had enrolled in a sustainable farming program that had to be completely canceled, according to Hendrix-Jenkins. She knows a woman in Nigeria who ran a small nonprofit that lost all funding.

Funding cuts to health programs mean potential pandemics such as avian flu are more threatening. In addition, the United States loses the soft power diplomacy benefits that come with supporting foreign aid, according to Hendrix-Jenkins. China has significant investments in Africa so U.S. businesses are at a disadvantage by comparison.

Potentially millions of people in Africa will lose access to treatment for tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS that would save their lives, according to David Bucura, coordinator of Friends Peace Teams' African Great Lakes Initiative.

Defunding USAID has caused the collapse of micro-lending programs for women in some African countries, Bucura noted. USAID-supported education programs have ended, affecting some of the most vulnerable people on the continent.

"The Trump administration's decision to reduce foreign aid has sparked concerns about Africa's growing debt burden and the continent's reliance on international assistance. Some African leaders are now advocating for homegrown solutions to replace traditional aid models," Bucura said.

Sharlee DiMenichi is a staff writer for Friends Journal. *Follow all our news coverage at* Friendsjournal.org/news*; send us tips at* news@friendsjournal.org.

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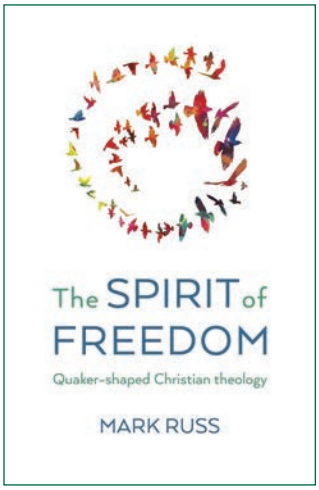
NP Team at the Women's March 'Kick Out the Clowns' Action in Madison, WI. June, 2025.

The Spirit of Freedom: Quaker-Shaped Christian Theology

By Mark Russ. Christian Alternative Books, 2024. 120 pages. $10.95/paperback; $5.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Brian Drayton



Sometimes I hear Friends say that Quakers don't do theology, but in actuality, as Mark Russ points out in his latest book, theology is "a very ordinary activity and we do it all the time. We can't escape it." And for those who find that surprising or confusing, he offers this simple explanation: "When we attempt to make sense of the Divine and our relationship to it, we're doing theology." Indeed—just as by our actions, we are always giving testimony about what Quakerism is.

It is true that intentionally committing theology is viewed skeptically in many parts of Quakerdom, and reading formal theology is not so common a pastime among us—especially if there is a hint that the work claims to be "normative." So it's refreshing when Russ shares early on in *The Spirit of Freedom* that his ministry *is* theology (a ministry that emerged after years as a music teacher). "Since theology is something we all do," he writes, "it's useful to have people who can help us do it better. I feel called to be one of those people. Doing theology is how I serve my Quaker community."

Russ is a British Liberal Friend who is also gay and Christian. He has been writing about Quaker theology for many years on his widely read blog, *jollyquaker.com*, which he started in 2013. The book is in effect a collection of posts from that blog; consequently, the 23 chapters are quite brief (typically two or three pages) and focused. Although Russ's thought is informed by scholarship, the tone is non-academic and conversational.

Two introductory chapters lay out the aims and scope of the work; the rest are organized into three parts. In parts 1 and 2, Russ takes inspiration from the first 12 "Advices and Queries" found in Britain Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, unpacking them one at a time. Following the presented order of these pithy yet theologically rich statements, he moves thematically from "speaking of, speaking to, knowing, and listening to God" to focusing on spiritual experience more directly in how Friends worship God, both the nature of it and how they actually do it and prepare for it. He also wrestles with the pluralism that is characteristic of modern Quakerism in matters of belief and practice.

Part 3 considers how Quakers are led to be "God's witnesses," and here Russ examines his own "whole life as a testimony" (an important part of that, he says, is "being an openly imperfect person"), in addition to offering commentary on a variety of topics, including what he calls "the Quakerly art of squashing" (essentially when someone offers up an idea or suggestion only to be "roundly stamped on") and the inclusion of trans and non-binary people in our Quaker communities. For the record, he's for it, and views their journeys of self-discovery as "inhabiting the important Quaker tradition of living the future now."

Speaking of identity and inclusion, it's noteworthy that Russ calls himself a "Quaker-shaped Christian," a phrase he uses in the title of his prior book, *Quaker Shaped Christianity*. In some parts of Quakerdom, Christian Friends can struggle to find their place in the Quaker weave. Such Friends contribute to Quaker vitality when they are open about their experience that Christianity is a way, path, or frontier, rather than a dogma and terminus. In *The Spirit of Freedom*, Russ shows how freedom to doubt and question go hand in hand with the slow clarification of thought and commitment that characterizes authentic spiritual growth.

As with ministry in a meeting for worship, readers will take in the author's words, testing them for how they may stimulate or nourish fresh life, as they recount moments of reflection and discovery: fresh openings in the author's life. In this way, any Friend or meeting will benefit from hearing and working with Russ's book, and the impacts will be as diverse as the Friends who are reading it. Theology is serviceable when it represents (and supports) *encounter*—meeting. This book does so.

Brian Drayton is a member of Weare (N.H.) Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, and a Friends minister. His most recent book will appear in fall of 2025 from Inner Light Books of Barclay Press: The Gospel in the Anthropocene: Letters from a Quaker Naturalist.

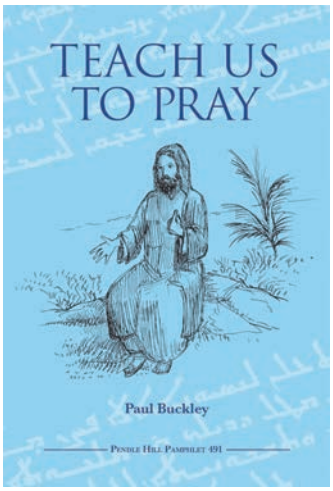
Teach Us to Pray

By Paul Buckley. Pendle Hill Pamphlets (number 491), 2025. 34 pages. $7.50/paperback or eBook.

Reviewed by John Andrew Gallery

Paul Buckley is a Quaker author whose thoughts I look forward to reading every time he publishes something new. He has a deep knowledge of Quaker history, beliefs, and practices, and his personal perspective on those topics always offers me new insights and challenges. Such is the case with his new Pendle Hill pamphlet, *Teach Us to Pray*.

The pamphlet is entirely devoted to the Lord's Prayer, the answer that Jesus gives to the disciple who asks him to "teach us to pray" in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Like Buckley, I



was raised Catholic, and undoubtedly the Lord's Prayer was the first prayer I memorized and repeated on a daily basis. I've said it so many times throughout my life that I can reel it off verbatim without even thinking. And that is Buckley's point: many of us know the prayer, but probably few of us have taken the time to think about what each phrase means to us today.

Buckley takes each phrase of the prayer separately and examines the intention behind it, then offers a phrase of his own that conveys the same concept as the original but in words that have more relevance to his spiritual life today. In the end, he gathers all these phrases into a new version of the prayer. Here, however, is the key to the pamphlet's purpose: after each of his phrases, he leaves a few blank lines for the reader to write in their own version; additionally, he leaves a full page open at the end of the pamphlet to bring all those phrases together. The challenge he presents is not to decide whether you agree with his interpretations or not; the challenge is to find your own words or (to quote George Fox out of context) to determine "what canst thou say."

I found that Buckley's phrases did not resonate with me, but I think he would say that's fine and even, perhaps, that's good. He clearly says to take his "comments, feelings, and reactions merely as a starting point. They are intended to be an invitation for you to do the same." In my case, the lack of connection that I had with his words provided a strong motivation to accept his invitation to find my own.

As I considered this prayer, I was surprised to realize that it and the opening prayer of the Qur'an have much in common. Both fit Buckley's definition of prayer: "Praying, as Jesus taught it, is not recitation; it is engaging in conversation with our celestial parent about the various parts of our lives and how in each one, we can recognize and acknowledge our dependence on divine sustenance."

Both are addressed to God. Both begin with praise for God: in one case, "hallowed be thy name"; in the other, noting God as "infinitely compassionate and merciful." Both are about "us," not about "me." The use of the word "us" implies that each prayer is to be said with others in your spiritual community (something that Buckley suggests doing). Even when said alone, the prayers are clear that we should seek God's blessings for our entire community, not just for ourselves alone. Both ask God's guidance to follow, as the Qur'an puts it, "the straight path," the path of trying to live in harmony with God.

The words of the Qur'an are not my words, but seeing the similarities helped me to understand the intentions behind some of the phrases in the Lord's Prayer and further motivated me to take up Buckley's challenge to find my own words.

I encourage Friends to read the pamphlet; read the phrases Buckley finds meaningful to his life today, and see how they resonate with you. Then take up his invitation and challenge to find the words that express the concepts in this much-loved prayer in a way that is meaningful for you today.

John Andrew Gallery attends Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia, Pa. He is the author of four Pendle Hill pamphlets and the recently published book Alone with God: Spiritual Reflections and Essays, 2000–2024.

Short Journey Home: Awakening to Freedom with Thich Nhat Hanh

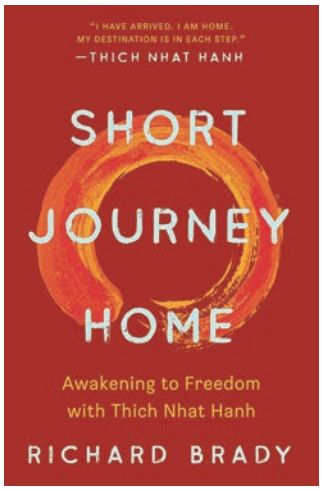
By Richard Brady. Parallax Press, 2024. 208 pages. $17.95/paperback; $12.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Harvey Gillman

I wrote this review of Richard Brady's book at the same time I was preparing to interview Jennifer Kavanagh, a recent Friend in Residence at Pendle Hill study center in Wallingford, Pa., on her new book *Thread of Life: My Russian Legacy*. All three of us are of Jewish origin and are members of Quaker meetings. We have all been influenced by Buddhism, especially by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. We are all discovering the connections between these three traditions. Through the lens of our life stories, we each ask: Who am I? What am I? Where am I going? Who is going with me? Where and what is home? These are also the basic questions posed by anyone who takes seriously the spiritual quest.

Brady is a seeker, teacher, communicator, storyteller, and a restless soul who seeks and often finds peace. Brought up in a non-practicing Jewish household, he was nonetheless taken "religiously" to a local Reform synagogue on Sundays with his brother. It was only years later that he discovered "the numinous aspect of religion" in Judaism.

At age 29, he became a mathematics teacher at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C., where he learned about Quakerism and meeting for worship. He first learned about Buddhist meditation from a student of his, and soon after, he attended a Buddhist memorial service for a Buddhist Quaker friend of his wife. He was very much taken with Buddhist practice but then wondered if had the same "the transcendent dimension" he'd discovered in



Quaker worship. It is this honest questioning and his ability to remain vulnerable that surely made Brady a good teacher and a good writer. He admits to his disappointments: after having enjoyed the questioning of his students at Sidwell, he attended a different Quaker meeting and found a certain complacency among the worshipers. He attended retreats in Plum Village (founded by Thich Nhat Hanh in France) and was overwhelmed, but coming down from the clouds back to daily life, he noticed how transitory the deep experience seemed.

The paradox of the book is that Brady understands that life itself is the teacher: that the here and now is the time and place to be, and that home is where you are. It is indeed a short journey, as the title implies, and yet he spends years traveling across continents and sits at the feet of so many teachers! How far does one have to travel from home to find home?

Brady understands that this awareness comes from years of discipline. We often need someone outside to point a finger at our hearts and souls. He talks of the three jewels transmitted by Thich Nhat Hanh: the Buddha nature, the Dharma, and the Sangha. These respectively refer to the journey into the self, as part of all things; the discipline of mindfulness; and the commitment to community. As I read this, I

kept drawing parallels between the Buddhist way and Quaker faith and practice. I see in these jewels some basic Quaker convictions: the sacredness of the person and of life itself, the discipline of quiet waiting to attend to the sacred teacher, and the need for community as a place of discernment and support.

Although he does not use the word "ministry" itself, Brady conveys a sense of his ministry. He is given the spiritual name "True Dharma Bridge" in recognition of his ability to transmit the wisdom of the tradition, of the discipline, and of his own discoveries. After an initiation ceremony at Plum Village, he came to realize that at Sidwell he will no longer be teaching only mathematics: "I'll be sharing, as best I can, empowerment, relationship, and love." Increasingly in later years, he helps other teachers to explore the passing on of meditative techniques and mindfulness.

Included in an appendix at the end are the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings that were created by Thich Nhat Hanh in 1966. These are meditations that members of Hanh's Order of Interbeing vow to reflect on each day. The overlap between these and Britain Yearly Meeting's "Advices and Queries" is remarkable, though the former are much longer than the latter. One noticeable difference is the tone, however. The Quaker text is tentative: full of exhortations to remember, to consider, and to question yourself; the Buddhist is full of resolutions: I am determined to, I am resolved, and we will practice. Perhaps that is a matter of culture, and the two ways may be able to sit comfortably together.

At one stage, Brady wonders whether he is a Jew, a Quaker, or a Buddhist. He answers that question when he writes: "In the historical dimension, we are separate beings who are born, grow older, and die. But in the ultimate dimension, we're ever-changing formations in a single interconnected reality, we *inter-are*."

There is a place beyond names and labels.

Harvey Gillman was outreach secretary for Britain Yearly Meeting for 18 years. He has traveled widely among Friends both at home and abroad, exploring the Quaker way and reflecting on issues of spirituality, outreach, inclusivity, and hospitality, both in his writings and in workshops and retreats.

The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage

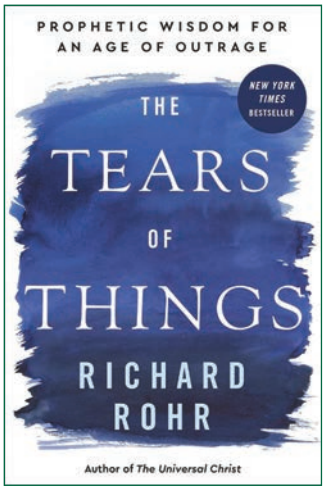
By Richard Rohr. Convergent Books, 2025. 208 pages. $27/hardcover; $13.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Windy Cooler

In *The Tears of Things*, Catholic priest and teacher Richard Rohr offers a luminous meditation on the prophetic vocation—one that Quakers, especially those called to public ministry, may find both deeply challenging and unexpectedly comforting. Rohr draws from the ancient Hebrew prophets (Amos, Jeremiah, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others), who, perhaps above all else, have a modern reputation for anger. But, as Rohr points out, when we look closely at their stories, we see that their anger matures into grief.

Jeremiah, for instance, writes first in the book bearing his name of impending violent catastrophe and divine retribution against a people who have given in to sin and who, he seemingly believes, deserve to be destroyed, but the story ends with a tender promise from the Divine: "I will restore you to health and I will heal your wounds" (Jeremiah 30:17). Through his careful reading, Rohr reframes what it means to be prophetic—not as one who merely denounces wrongs, but as one who suffers *with* the world and calls it lovingly toward wholeness.

Quakers often affirm that prophets are misunderstood in their own time, and many Friends who have spoken



hard truths have known that pain firsthand. Some were dismissed for their message, others simply for their manner. As Rohr reminds us, prophets are rarely polished. They are not fortune-tellers but "full truth-tellers" who "pull back the veil to radically reframe our preferred storyline of history: the boring and predictable narrative of winners and losers, rewards and punishments."

This vision resonates strongly with our Quaker testimony of continuing revelation. The true prophet, Rohr says, is one who can see with both clarity and compassion—not in dualities like right or wrong. But the journey to that kind of vision is not quick. Many begin in outrage, as they must, in response to injustice and pain. Yet prophetic anger, Rohr cautions, is not enough. "If we stay with our rage and resentment too long," he writes, "we will righteously and unthinkingly pass on the hurt in ever new directions. . . . Forgiveness of reality—including tragic reality—is the heart of the matter."

Instead of staying in anger, *The Tears of Things* asks us to consider tears as the prophet's true inheritance. "Tears come from both awe and empathy," Rohr says. Tears can transform not only how we see the world, but how we act within it. He writes, "[T]he soul must weep to be a soul at all." For Friends who often begin their leadings in stillness, this insight is striking: weeping becomes

a kind of waiting worship, a spiritual opening through which new life and vision may flow.

This spiritual maturity—what Rohr calls the movement from "unfinished prophets" to compassionate truth-tellers—is something many of us long for in our meetings and in our ministries. It is the difference between shouting from the margins and standing *in* community, speaking hard truths with tenderness and responsibility. As Friends navigate this time of division, loss, and urgency, this reminder feels important: "What you think is goodness is too often delusion, and what you think is bad just might be your spiritual best friend." The prophetic path is not self-assured—it is surrendered.

Public ministry, as we understand it in the Quaker tradition, must be rooted not in self-righteous fury but in broken-hearted love. For Friends who feel despair, who are tempted to lash out in their grief or retreat into cynicism, *The Tears of Things* is a call back to the center. It offers no simple answers, but it does offer a tender map. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke reminds us: "Everything terrible is something that needs our love."

In the end, Rohr's message is this: true prophecy does not stand apart in judgment; it opens in love. For Quakers committed to the healing of our communities and the world, this book is a wellspring. It reminds us that ministry is not about winning arguments but about walking with Spirit, eyes open and heart soft, ready to weep—and to act.

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*Windy Cooler is an embraced public minister under the care of Sandy Spring (Md.) Meeting (Baltimore Yearly Meeting) with a long-standing ministry of right relationship. She is currently the convener of Friends Incubator for Public Ministry (*friendsincubator.org*).*

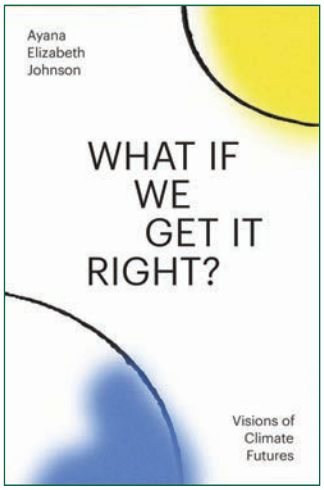
What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures

By Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. One World, 2024. 496 pages. $34/hardcover; $13.99/eBook.

Reviewed by Ruah Swennerfelt

This book gives me hope. It is a series of interviews (that seem like conversations), poems, and author comments about visions for a sustainable climate future. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson shares 20 interviews from a wide variety of people with many interests and skills, and groups them around themes such as possibility, divestment, community, and transformation. It is not a sit-down-and-read-through type of book. Each conversation is to be savored for the amazing insights and commitments of both Johnson and the interviewees.

The format is unusual, somewhat like a textbook, but with Johnson



drawing attention to important parts with markings in the margins: hearts for "poignant and heartfelt bits," asterisks to indicate "a key insight or possibility,", and exclamation points for "key points of concern." And sometimes she underlines "key terms that point the way forward." A marine biologist, policy expert, and teacher, Johnson brings her understanding of what the future might hold and asks questions that are filled with understanding the interviewee's subject. The reader can pick and choose a chapter or themed section that is of immediate interest and then return to what was missed.

I especially appreciated the chapter with Judith D. Schwartz, a science journalist who shares her insights about "nature-inspired solutions," which ask, "What is nature doing? What are the processes that bring a given ecosystem into health, that support the synergies among different species?" Schwartz gives the example of beavers, which she calls "nature's engineers," creating dams that help landscapes absorb more water. To which Johnson replies, "It's such a lovely thought that beavers are part of the answer, not an annoyance." Each conversation is illuminating and engaging.

There are conversations with economists, tech experts, film makers, educators, farmers, journalists, politicians, and environmental activists—just a sampling of the depth and breadth of this book. I didn't always agree with the outlooks of the interviewees, but reading this book helped me to better understand their points of view. That's a good place to grow from.

I really liked Johnson's "what if?" style of approaching the subjects. It reminded me of Transition Movement cofounder Rob Hopkins's 2019 book, *From What Is to What If*, which has inspired my way of looking at a dilemma. Instead of getting bogged down in, "That's how it's always been done," there may be some new insight if we ask, "What if?"

Johnson considers the "What if . . . ?" frame of mind in the introduction: "A mind-expanding question, often asked with a twinkle in the eye. An invitation to imagine. And goodness do we need more imagination right now, to create clearer visions of desirable climate futures."

Learning the ideas and knowledge of experts in their varied fields, readers may be led to learn more about that topic by researching further. It's like a sampler of current climate thinking and how a different trajectory of our lives may be possible.

Ruah Swennerfelt is a member of Middlebury (Vt.) Meeting and is clerk of the New England Yearly Meeting Earthcare Ministry Committee. She is also serving on the Third Act Faith Coordinating Committee and co-coordinator of Sustainable Charlotte Vermont. She and her husband are homesteaders on lands that once were home to the Abenakis.

The Coracle and the Copper Bell: Poems to Carry Skin and Soul

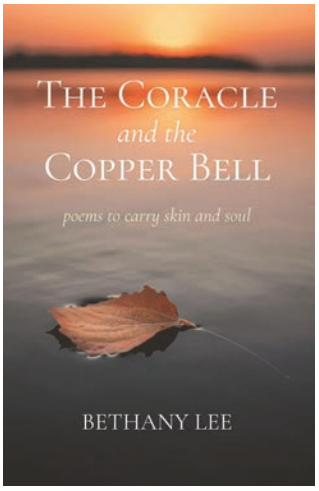
By Bethany Lee. Fernwood Press, 2024. 156 pages. $19/paperback.

Close to the Surface: A Family Journey at Sea

By Bethany Lee. Fernwood Press, 2024. 376 pages. $27/paperback.

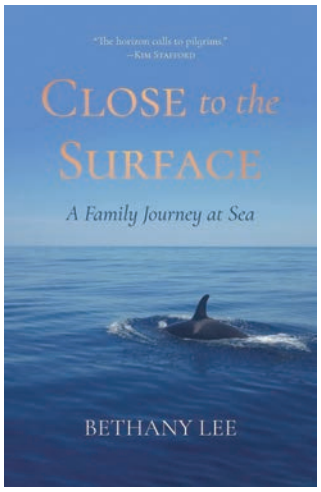
Reviewed by Tom and Sandy Farley

Oregon's Bethany Lee is a recorded Quaker minister, musician, and poet who has published three books of



poetry. Her third is *The Coracle and the Copper Bell*. I (Sandy) found the poems in this collection refreshing and intriguing because of Lee's creative use of language. In the opening poem, she builds an extended metaphor of constructing a coracle—a small boat of skin stretched over a frame—in which she can carry the joys and sorrows of her life, and how each morning requires more stretch to contain all that her life asks her to carry.

A nautical theme in some poems is not surprising since Lee is an accomplished sailor and dinghy builder, as recounted in her memoir *Close to the Surface* (see below), about a yearlong ocean sailing adventure. The three sections of *The Coracle and the Copper Bell* are aptly titled "Casting Off," "Sea Change," and "Becoming Home." That last heading echoes the



final line in the epilogue of *Close to the Surface*.

I catch my breath over some of the unexpected pictures she paints. From "The Courage to Go First": "and yet you can't help but leave wisdom behind you / hanging in the air like perfume." And from "Still": "I have held death in my arms / stumbled, am learning to walk / carrying it side by side with beauty."

The natural world is a constant source of inspiration for those who pause, listen, accept, and try to put words to what they see and hear. Like many Friends, Lee shares a sense of sadness over the deterioration of earth's environment and expresses it in several poems. Consider the first and last stanzas of an environmental lament, "Undoubtedly":

> Once, we could be certain
> we certainly thought so anyway
> The sun would keep rising
> Spring would return again
> The redwoods would outlive us all
>
> . . .
>
> But we are awake now
> left with no alternative
> but to love in crimson
> wonder about the end
> of green, stay uncertain
> and here for all of it

Lee's faith is manifested in caring concern, humility, and advice on how to stay afloat. She describes agonies and burdens she bears. She calls us back to Spirit with the closing lines of "Just Enough Holy Kindness": "we are all connected by suffering / open your ears / Your neighbor is weeping."

The first two pages of Lee's memoir, *Close to the Surface*, are detailed drawings of the sailboat *LiLo* (pronounced "Lie-Low, unless in Mexico, where folks say Lee-Low. She answers happily to either one."), one exterior and one below deck. The next two pages display maps of *LiLo*'s voyage from the mouth of the Columbia River down the Pacific Coast to Puerto Vallarta and back. Looking at these, I (Tom) had hope for

a grand sailing adventure; *Close to the Surface* is that and more. Lee tells the true story of how, starting in the fall of 2013, she, her husband, Bryan, and their two teenage daughters took nearly a year to sail the *LiLo* on that 4,000-mile voyage.

Each of the 35 chapters begins with location, month, moon phase, and a quotation—some from Lee's own poems. Their journey is one of exploration, not a rush to get somewhere. In San Francisco Bay, they visited the Angel Island Immigration Station. Lee notes the discovery of poems written on the walls in Chinese by immigrants detained there. She reflects, "By unspoken agreement, we joined the silence of the site, trying in our small way to honor the pain and perseverance of those who had come here before us." Yes, a moment of worship.

A family of four could get tired of each other, but they were not alone the whole time. They found themselves in the company of fellow seafarers and the people in harbors who serve them, together creating a community of mutual support spanning borders.

Some of their challenges were weather-related. Rough passages are recounted with excitement. One night off Baja California, their dinghy, which took them nine months to build, washed away; they built a new one in a week.

In the last chapter, Lee laments not being able to reflect on the full range of their joys and discoveries: "There is simply no way to capture the gift of spending these days side by side or the power of facing a challenge together and, together, accomplishing what we could not do alone." But in the epilogue, she sums it all up in poetic ministry:

> Once, our adventure was a tale to tell, places we had been, things we had done. In the telling, I learned: our lives are never just the story of what we have accomplished but of how we have unfurled. I no longer wonder if I can make it home. I am becoming home.

Sandy and Tom Farley are members of Palo Alto (Calif.) Meeting's San Mateo Worship Group and coauthors of Earthcare for Children*, which Sandy also illustrated. They are both teachers, storytellers, and booksellers.*

In Brief

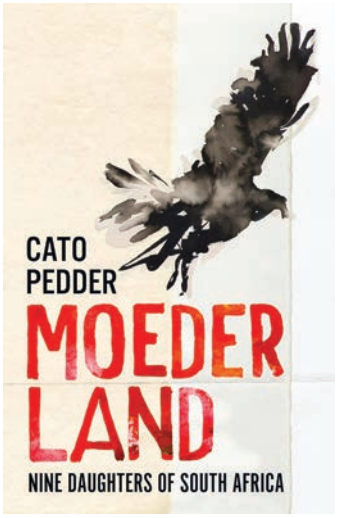
Moederland: Nine Daughters of South Africa

By Cato Pedder. John Murray, 2024. 348 pages. $29.10/hardcover.

A British Quaker, Cato Pedder is a great-granddaughter of the famous (or infamous) South African prime minister and White supremacist Jan Smuts, who also served his country as a military officer and statesman before being elected its leader, serving from 1919–24 and 1939–48. Smut's legacy includes both helping to establish the League of Nations and the United Nations, and also supporting racial segregation and contributing to early apartheid policies. Pedder's maternal grandmother, Catharina, for whom she was named (Cato being a nickname), was an Afrikaner of a line of Afrikaners stretching back to the 1652 Calvinist Dutch settlers and their children (some of mixed race).

Pedder attempts to make sense of her place in all of this complicated history by telling the stories of nine of her ancestors, all women: a Khoikhoi translator; an enslaved girl from Bengal; an emigrant from Germany; four Afrikaners; a daughter of Jan Smuts who escapes to England and marries a Quaker; and her daughter (Pedder's aunt) who returns to southern Africa, falls in love across the color bar, and fights what her grandfather helped to build.

The stories are gleaned from family tradition and corrected and amplified through archival research. She pieces together the story of survival and



racism that led to apartheid, including the role played by women. History tells of men, mostly White, while Afrikaner women kept house, tended babies, and remained invisible. Pedder shines a light on them. Family loyalty tugs at her moral repugnance as she tries to come to terms with the contradictions between her family's legacy and her Quaker ethics, especially as seen through female experiences. Interwoven with the family history are vignettes from her many trips to South Africa to visit relatives, see the homes where her female ancestors held forth, and observe conditions before and after the fall of legal apartheid.

Moederland ends on a high note of the first multiracial election in April 1994, although Pedder's visits since then offer glimpses of more recent conditions. It is a fascinating, honest, and thought-provoking story. It might be a model for Friends as we examine our connection with slavery and Native American boarding schools.

—Reviewed by Marty Grundy, a New England Friend who briefly visited the Republic of South Africa in 1982 and 1990 while her husband, Ken, devoted much of his professional career to researching politics in the area

Thread of Life: My Russian Legacy

By Jennifer Kavanagh. Liberalis Books, 2025. 176 pages. $16.95/paperback; $7.99/eBook.

In *Thread of Life*, Quaker author Jennifer Kavanagh offers evolving versions of her extended family's story set against the backdrop of twentieth-century European history. She reflects on the construction of memories, the distinction between memoir and history, and the personal impact of major public events.

Many of Kavanagh's relatives perished in the Holocaust, and she discusses a shift in her relationship to that devastation. She writes: "The Holocaust threw a dark shadow on our lives. It's something I've avoided all my life—I would never read about it, or see a film that dealt with it—till now. It's taken me all this time to face what it's meant in the life of my family."

During a visit to Jerusalem in 1994, Kavanagh learns about the longtime oppression Palestinians have endured. At the Western (Wailing) Wall, she experiences overwhelming grief for her maternal grandmother, Dora, who was fatally shot by the Nazis after being forced to live in insufferable conditions in the Jewish ghetto in Riga, Latvia.

The author's mother tried ardently, but in vain, to secure a visa to rescue Dora. Kavanagh's brother recounts his childhood memory of their mother receiving a letter announcing

Dora's death six years after the fact. Kavanagh's mother wept and could not be consoled.

Readers will appreciate how the book's vantage point shifts from the panoramic to the personal as well as the captivating details it presents.

—*Reviewed by Sharlee DiMenichi, staff writer for* Friends Journal

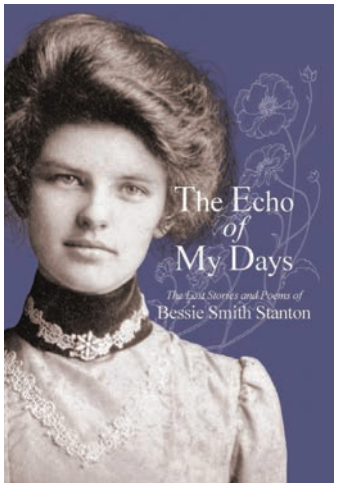
The Echo of My Days: The Lost Stories and Poems of Bessie Smith Stanton

By Bessie Smith Stanton, edited by Jim Stanton, Bill Stanton, and Lola Stanton. White River Press, 2024. 172 pages. $22/paperback.

In the introduction to the book, the author's grandson introduces readers to his hospitable and versatile grandmother Bessie Smith Stanton, who, in addition to writing, worked on a farm, managed a home, and cooked copiously. Stanton's father was a Quaker minister who often traveled to distant meetings. She recalled happy memories of growing up in a small meeting. She was an alumna of the Quaker-founded Wilmington College in Ohio, where she attended in 1900–1904.

The volume contains a novella, short stories, and poems. The novella, "The Voice in the Ether," starts with an intriguing line: "Without the Voice it never would have happened." The novella continues with a description of a wondrous and mysterious tale involving suffering. Stanton introduces readers to the protagonist, John Raven, who lives in a shack in the forest with his highly perceptive dog. A physically robust lover of nature, Raven leads a life of solitude broken only by listening to the radio. Stanton describes his intense response to regaining radio reception after an outage:

> Raven's heart seemed like a lump of stone, so still it hung within him. Then it seemed driving the wild joy through him in throbbing



surges of blood to his temples,
to his pulses as he realized that
once more that wide world which
lay so far beyond his forest hut
could speak to him through the
witchery of wires refastened,
the uncomprehended power of
limitless space.

The novella contains many such eloquent descriptions as the author chronicles Raven falling in love and learning to live with a disability.

The short story, "Amelia's Awakening," concerns a harsh and cynical woman who unexpectedly becomes the guardian of her young niece, Mazie, after her estranged sister dies. Amelia had been in love with Mazie's father and became hardhearted after he married her sister. The story traces Amelia's emotional journey after she meets Mazie.

One of the poems, "The Pine Tree," which reflects on nature and the Divine, includes this stanza:

God is often real
Underneath a pine
Maybe he can feel
How I need a sign
Making a pine tree
Giving it to me.

Friends looking for evocative prose and thoughtful poetry will enjoy this volume.

—Reviewed by Sharlee DiMenichi, staff writer for Friends Journal

The Burning of Pennsylvania Hall

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tragedy including air crashes, wildfires, and inflation.

In his March 4, 2025, address to Congress, President Trump declared that he had "ended the tyranny of so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies all across the entire federal government and, indeed, the private sector and our military. And our country will be woke no more."

Like the current effort to crush and purge DEI, the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall was a shocking and traumatic event for advocates of equality. Their response is instructive. While some reformers were intimidated and silenced, others who had been in the cross hairs of the mob's violence—like Lucretia and James Mott—were strengthened in their resolve. They saw the world differently, having come face-to-face with the horrific ignorance and violence behind our fear of inclusion. James Mott later described his experience as being cathartic in a letter to Anne Weston: "The color prejudice lurking within me was entirely destroyed by the night of Pennsylvania Hall."

Almost two hundred years later, within a still deeply divided and polarized nation, this same fear of diversity, equality, and inclusion is dismantling decades of struggle for equal rights. With the exception of some corporate and institutional leaders (like Harvard University) and legal challenges, there has been a muted resistance. Yet, we stand in the shadow of Pennsylvania Hall. Those reformers who responded so bravely in the face of mob violence are reaching out to us today. ❑

A Fine Union of Serenity and Adventure

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discouragement in Vining's biography.

Jones described his spiritual embodiment as organic mysticism, a kind of mysticism as normal as breathing. Organic mysticism was not a philosophical position; it was the knowledge of the underlying truth that verified a philosophical position. It was not emotional, intellectual, or volitional. It was not a peak ecstasy, but it brought with it "fresh springs of life, the inauguration of a sense of mission, the flooding of the life with hope and gladness and the conviction, amounting to a certainty, that God is found as an environing and vitalizing Presence."

In the transfiguration story in Matthew 17:5, Jesus heard a voice that validated him and his ministry. At the end of his transfiguration story, Rufus Jones embodied a life-changing feeling of unconditional acceptance: In "Recovery of the Lost Radiance," he wrote:

> The sense of belonging—"He is mine and I am His"—makes life feel like a new creation, and the assurance that "God is for us" helps to eliminate the paralysis of fear as well as of pessimism, or of cynicism. There comes a fine union of serenity and adventure.

Spirit had healed the deep contradictions in Jones's character. His divided will, mind, and heart became unitive, and the result was "increased integration in [his] life, moral fortification, sensitivity of spirit, quickened spiritual vitality, increased tenderness, and heightened power to stand 'the heavy and weary weight' of daily toil and grind."

Rufus Jones had discovered the lost radiance. ❑

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and security. We ask now, as MOVE asked then: are Friends prepared to take this ethical leap?

LAND AS REPARATIONS

Our discussion on solidarity extends to the ongoing struggle faced by MOVE survivors, particularly in their efforts to reclaim land as a form of reparations, a term we intentionally use to frame this vision of justice for MOVE that demands material redress. The relentless attempts to displace MOVE from their home in Powelton Village were driven by a belief that their presence caused property values to plummet, blocking broader gentrification efforts. MOVE's steadfast resilience against these powerful forces showed their commitment to advocating for marginalized voices and asserting their right to remain in their community.

Their struggle brings into focus the role of those who aimed to support MOVE. The Quakers, known for their commitment to peace and social justice, attempted to address the conflicts surrounding MOVE through their principle of "bearing witness." However, their approach during the MOVE crisis often fell short of the risky solidarity the situation called for. The case of a New Jersey Quaker farmer who supposedly offered land to MOVE illustrates this gap. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) reported on this situation in 1978, suggesting that the offer was intended to ease tensions by relocating MOVE. Despite this, AFSC Quakers later acknowledged their failure to verify the story's origin, stating, "to this day we don't know how that story began."

MOVE, however, denied AFSC's narrative, asserting that they were never offered land and dismissing the story as one of "the many lies that the Mayor Frank Rizzo administration is telling on the MOVE ORGANIZATION." These conflicting narratives from MOVE, the Quakers, and local government officials aren't just differing perspectives; they expose who gets to control the narrative and, ultimately, who has the power to define justice. Each account brings its own perspective, casting the true record of events as fractured and ambiguous. When MOVE denied AFSC's narrative, they were potentially rejecting a system that silenced their voice and ignored their calls for genuine recognition and justice.

Today, MOVE members, alongside Philadelphia activists, continue to demand the restitution of their house on Osage Avenue, the freeing of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the full return of the remains of the MOVE children killed in the 1985 bombing by Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania. Their demands stress this need for tangible gestures of material and social repair.

CONCLUSION

In the 1970s the Black Manifesto called upon white institutions to consider what they owe Black folk and to pay it back; it remains relevant as ever. The Philadelphia City Council established a Reparations Task Force in 2023 that aims to "report on how reparations can atone for the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and institutional racism in America for Black Philadelphians." In doing this work, the city has an historic opportunity to acknowledge, confront, and repair the losses inflicted upon MOVE. Offering reparations to Black Philadelphia means offering reparations to MOVE. Honoring MOVE's needs is one step towards addressing the broader, ongoing struggles faced by the Black community.

In this context, Quakers, too, are faced with the ethical imperative to reflect on their role in racism and direct their energy and resources towards reparations in the present. For over 55 years, Friends failed to collectively respond to the call for reparations issued by the BEDC. To the question how meetings should use their money, we answer: reparations, now. A living testimony to Quaker values could involve directly donating to MOVE's efforts to reclaim their home on Osage Avenue. Meetings could look into their property holdings and investigate land that could be, or should be, returned. Meetings could follow the example of Green Street Meeting, which has pledged $500,000 towards reparations, primarily focused on helping their Black neighbors keep their homes in the face of gentrification.

We need a Quaker practice of nonviolence that actively creates peace and justice within the world, and we can only do so by confronting racism. History provides examples of what not to do: the ways Quakers failed to show solidarity with MOVE, the response to the Black Economic Development Conference, and the ways that Friends' white privilege was mobilized to the detriment of Philadelphia's Black community. Repair is necessary and possible; reparations offer a meaningful, material place to begin. ❑

The original version of this article, including footnotes and citations can be found linked from the online version of this article at Friendsjournal.org/quaker-move.

Deaths

Cochran—*Janet Stewart Fyne Cochran*, 92, on September 7, 2023, at Friends Homes Guilford in Greensboro, N.C. Janet was born on June 28, 1931, the only child of Abraham Harry Fyne and Janet Stewart Fyne, in Henderson, N.C. She grew up in Sumter, S.C., and graduated from Edmunds High School in 1949. In 1953, she earned her bachelor's degree from the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina (now UNC Greensboro). She received her advanced degrees from UNCG: a master's degree in 1966 and a doctorate of education in 1979.

Janet began her professional career in the early days of television at WBTW in Florence, S.C., where she met her future husband, James Beard "Jim" Cochran Jr. They married on August 4, 1956, at First Methodist Church in Sumter. They shared passions for jazz, tennis, travel, boating, and the beach.

Janet found purpose and meaning using her formidable intellect teaching English literature and composition to students at several colleges and universities in North Carolina. She eventually settled at Guilford College. Not content with earning accolades as a published poet and short story writer, she became the director of the Carson Scholars, which became the Native American Program, Guilford's ambitious program to recruit and mentor Native American students. Her efforts were rewarded with numerous tribal honors from the Montana Nation. She was instrumental in building a library on the reservation, and had the distinct privilege of being invited to a sacred peyote ceremony.

Janet has been described as an elegant and stylish person and was equally generous and caring. Her compassion was felt not only by the people she befriended but also could be seen in her lifelong devotion to animal welfare. She said often that she was blessed to foster relationships with all types of people.

Janet also found time to rear two talented and successful artists, her daughter, Shannon, an actress living in Los Angeles, Calif., and her son, Stewart, a musician living in Austin, Tex. She doted on Tyler, her only grandchild.

By 1998, Janet found her way to active membership at New Garden Meeting in Greensboro. In addition to serving on the Meeting for Ministry and Counsel, she went on the Quaker Pilgrimage in 1998 led by David Bills to England, Scotland, and Wales. Her English literature background came in handy as she presented information to the group on the Brontës prior to visiting the Brontë Parsonage Museum. She was able to watch her daughter perform in a play while in London.

Janet was predeceased by her husband, James Beard "Jim" Cochran Jr., in 2018.

She is survived by two children, Shannon Elaine Cochran (Michael Canavan) and Stewart Owen Cochran (partner Leigh Tenhet); and one grandchild.

Tweedy—*Patricia Lynn "Pat" Foust Tweedy*, 76, on April 17, 2024, of brain cancer, at the TerraBella assisted living facility in Greensboro, N.C. Pat was born on May 2, 1947, to Hoyle Franklin and Ruth Elaine Greer Foust in Lexington, N.C. She had two sisters, Cheryl and Pamela. Pat graduated from Central Davidson High School in 1965 and from Wake Forest University in 1969. The following year she earned her master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, followed by a Sixth-Year Education Certificate.

Pat met her husband, Reginald Edward "Ed" Tweedy, at Wake Forest. They married on August 3, 1968, at Memorial United Church of Christ in Lexington, and would enjoy 55 happy years of marriage. Pat and Ed had three sons, Phillip Harrell, Jonathan Edward, and Eamonn Patrick.

Pat worked in many fields after her formal education including the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, followed by Guilford County Schools, where she worked first as a counselor and then with children with autism. After having children, Pat worked part time in the hotel banquet industry, then at Goodwill Industries as an employment evaluator and counselor for 15 years before she retired.

Pat was active in many community service organizations, including the Funeral Consumers Alliance of North Carolina, Alabama P.E.O. (a philanthropic organization where women celebrate the advancement of women), and the Guilford College Art Appreciation Club. Pat and Ed loved to travel. They lived with their family in Ireland from 1979 to 1984. They taught cultural exchange sessions in Poland through Angloville International.

While not a member of New Garden Meeting, Pat enjoyed participating in many of its meetings for worship and opportunities to serve. She was on the New Garden Meals on Wheels team and was a volunteer for memorial receptions and the annual fall sales.

Pat enjoyed filling Little Free Libraries, particularly the one at New Garden where she was eager to add antiracist books. She was generous in sharing her garden flowers, huge cookbook collection, and freshly cooked meals.

Pat is survived by her husband, Edward Tweedy; three children, Jonathan Tweedy (Zoemma Steffen), Eamonn Tweedy (Sung Un Kim), and Phillip Tweedy; and two sisters, Pamela Foust Heye and Cheryl Head.

Unfug—*Harriet Elise Gilbert Treadwell Unfug*, 90, on January 26, 2025, in Decatur, Ga. Harriet was born on December 24, 1934, the second of four daughters of Harriet (Felton) and Vernon Rountree Gilbert, in Ventura, Calif. She grew up in Ventura practicing the Episcopal faith with her mother, and especially enjoyed singing in the choir.

Harriet married Perry Edward Treadwell in 1952 and was a devoted mother of four children. The family moved to Atlanta, Ga., in 1962 when Perry took a faculty position at Emory University. Harriet earned an associate degree from Emory while running their household.

In 1968, during a year of Perry's sabbatical in La Jolla, Calif., they attended their first Quaker meeting. They continued to attend the meeting, joining protests against the Vietnam War. Back in Atlanta, they became active in Atlanta Meeting. Harriet joined other Friends in November 1969 for a national antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C. She became a member of Atlanta Meeting in 1974.

In the 1970s, they were one of several families in the meeting who, inspired by simple living principles and the needs of the neighborhood, moved to the Candler Park neighborhood near the meetinghouse. Harriet and two Friends started a women's monthly lunch group that continues to this day. Harriet worked to address the needs of the area in a variety of ways, including at the Chrysalis, a drug rehabilitation center for teenagers, and she helped create and run the Patch Inc., a community center in Cabbagetown for children of low-income millworkers, as well as the Paideia School. With Friends, she successfully protested a proposed freeway that would have disrupted neighborhoods.

In 1977, Harriet and Perry along with Friends from Atlanta Meeting played a key role in the revitalization of the Little Five Points neighborhood as part owners of the Little Five Points Community Pub, which became known as the "Quaker Pub." The pub had been a site for drug trade and violence. Creating a safe space for community gatherings with good food led to a series of other positive changes in the area. Harriet began a long career at the BOND Community Federal Credit Union in 1988.

After her divorce from Perry, Harriet married Douglas Unfug, proposing to him in 1996. They had many happy years together until his death in 2017.

When Harriet offered her spiritual journey to Atlanta Meeting in 2010, she spoke of feeling love for the simplicity and silence of her first meeting. She recalled silently singing chants from morning prayers to help her settle in worship. She was guided by the belief that there is that of God in everyone and the teachings of Jesus for how to live.

Harriet was a vivacious, kind, and loving person living life fully, from teenage drugstore soda jerk to community builder to the matriarch of her family. Friends remember her generosity and ability to always find a way to help. Even though diminished by dementia, she never forgot her children's names.

Harriet was predeceased by her husband, Douglas Unfug.

She is survived by four children, Gilbert Treadwell, Gail Holland (Clay), Sally Treadwell, and Susan Treadwell (Linda); and three grandchildren.

In January, several Quaker meetings filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security over a change in policy that authorizes ICE agents to breach the sanctuary of places of worship to detain suspected undocumented peoples. For Rebecca Leuchak, the presiding clerk of New England Yearly Meeting, joining that lawsuit is not a political position.

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"I see it as an affirmation and a very positive reinforcement of constitutional rights that this country is founded on," Rebecca says, rights "that ensure the freedom of expression of religion, the freedom to associate, to bring communities of faith together without penalty. . . . It really speaks to all of our testimonies," she adds. "It's core to who we are historically as a religious society."

Friends Journal has been monitoring the lawsuit's progress; read our coverage at *Friendsjournal.org/quakers-sue-dhs*.

Season 12 is here! Watch this video at ***QuakerSpeak.com***.

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