Heeding God's Call

REPORTS FROM
A GATHERING ON PEACE
Drinking at the Well

This month we bring you a spontaneous special issue on the recent “Heeding God’s Call: A Gathering on Peace,” held in January at the Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia, and sponsored by the Historic Peace Churches (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren). The first inklings that we might do such an issue came when Tom Swain, clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, asked me during a weekend at Pencle Hill if the JOURNAL had planned to cover the gathering. My answer was “yes,” but I wasn’t clear how much coverage we were prepared to do. As we considered this question back in the office, and thought about the two years of planning that had gone into this event—and its ecumenical outreach, with careful attempts to involve all branches of Friends, Mennonites, Brethren, and 45 other Christian denominations, plus Jewish and Muslim participant-observers—it became increasingly clear that something special was needed to give the proceedings adequate coverage.

It was just the right moment for us to take a leap of our own. Conversations have been going on for quite some time at the JOURNAL about ways to use our website in more innovative and immediate ways. The Peace Gathering gave us an opportunity to provide ongoing daily coverage through a special section of our website at www.friendsjournal.org/peace. The organizers of the gathering were wonderful about directing participants to post comments and reflections on our site, and we had the opportunity to send two of our interns to the gathering to provide additional coverage and photos for us.

The articles in this issue were offered as talks delivered to participants or as reflections about the gathering after it was completed. Typical of any special issue of the JOURNAL, we received far more material for possible publication in our pages than we had space to use. Most of the articles that did not find their way into this issue can be found posted on our web pages dedicated to the Peace Gathering.

Many aspects of this gathering were remarkably wonderful. The two-year process leading up to it was prayerful, and the organizers felt strongly that they wanted the entire event held in an atmosphere of prayer, which continued throughout the proceedings. The ecumenical framework they chose invited broad participation by many constituencies, and offered an opportunity to connect and network with fellow peace workers from many faith traditions. What an opportunity to build bonds of solidarity and to create networks that can carry the message of active peacemaking! Beyond ecumenism, the gathering was racially integrated, and—taking place close to the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.—drew deeply upon his life, work, and tremendous contributions to the history and practice of nonviolence. King, Gandhi, and Jesus were frequently discussed for the examples they gave to us of how to embody love in a transformational way.

I know that some folks were disappointed that this gathering was inspirational—that gave an unfortunate exclusive feel to it that left some feeling left out or passed over. Having organized large gatherings myself, I am aware of the daunting task the organizers faced in trying to provide fair and equal representation of all the constituencies they wished to include. And, as one of the individuals whose schedule made it impossible to attend the sessions, I can recommend this special issue and our special web pages to you as a very good place to get a real flavor of what the Peace Gathering was about if you were unable to attend. There’s much of great value here, which can be absorbed more slowly, and perhaps, therefore, in some ways more deeply. I hope and pray we will see more such gatherings in the future, until all who wish to drink at this well are full to the brim.

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Cover photo by Emily Stewart.
There are Native Americans in Florida

In most issues of Friends Journal I find several pieces that speak to me on a deep level, and the February 2009 issue is no exception. Paul Hamelli's account of his cancer ("My Year of Cancer") and his lessons about prayer, faith, and love go to the heart of things with an astounding economy of words. Merry Stanford's statement about where she comes from and how several traditions have hit her way and helped her become who she is ("I Am Who I Am") gave me encouragement—courage and support—to be more forthright about my own spiritual journey.

However, Fran Palmeri's discussion of the Peace Testimony and the environment in "Making Peace with Mother Earth" troubled me, not in the manner she intended, but rather due to lack of basic fact-checking. Having lived in Florida for three stretches totaling 19 years, I recognize and share her distress over the environmental destruction there. But she is incorrect in saying there is "not one" Native American residing in Florida. The most preliminary Internet search immediately yields the addresses and phone numbers for the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes, the two federally recognized tribes with sizable reservations, profitable casinos, and substantial political power in South Florida. The situation is different in North Florida, where I spent more time, but still nothing like the author's description. For more than a century a state law prohibited Native Americans from living in Florida outside of those Seminole and Miccosukee lands. Even before the Cherokee removal from North Carolina, most of North Florida's Muskogee Creek people were removed to Oklahoma by order of Andrew Jackson. The remnant of the Creeks who remained in Florida survived by "passing." They took English names, attended churches, and called their customs "country ways." Many did not teach their children their native language or even tell them they were Native Americans.

But the people are still there, and times have changed. As it has become safer and regarded as more interesting and less shameful to be of Native American descent, many are reclaiming their heritage. The politics of these groups are complex and intense, grappling with claims to authenticity in personal and communal identity when it is unclear what is "authentic," as well as with all the challenges typically faced by any small cultural or spiritual community. For those groups that seek federal tribal recognition, the possibility of receiving federal funds can also lead to conflicts over their distribution. The story of Native Americans in Florida is thus complicated by all the after-effects of ethnic cleansing, attempted genocide, and other forms of oppression. But it is a story of survival against great odds, not of extinction.

Dana P. Reinbold

We apologize for our fact-checking error.—Eds.

Disability and quality of life

I have to write about Burton Housman's article, "Listening to Lincoln" (FJ Mar.). While the article helps us understand war on many levels and has moved me to be honest with my son-in-law regarding his plans to enlist, our Friend commits the same error in his writing that so many in our culture commit when addressing issues of disabilities from the non-disabled perspective. There is a ringing and pervasive pity throughout the article about both soldiers returning disabled and their families who may have to transition to caretaker roles.

Discrimination on the basis of race is fairly easy for most of us to define now. The canned pre-judgments and stereotypes that spew forth from the (mostly) Anglo mouth are more seldom and easy to spot. Unfortunately those same kinds of prejudices (prejudgments) are still widely accepted in society as a whole and still used to discuss the lives of people with disabilities. The basic underlying prejudice that people with disabilities face is a negative assumption about the quality of a life lived with a disability.

I work and live in the disability community as a social justice advocate. We see disability as a perspective that informs the human community in a unique way which no other experience can do. It shows a unique and important face of God. My daughter was born with significant disabilities and would not change her perspective for the world. My experience of life as her main supportive ally is also one I would not give up now for anything. And the lives and actions of returning Vietnam Veterans with disabilities changed the outcomes possible for her just ten years after that war ended. Vets designing lightweight portable wheelchairs, developing mechanisms to enable independence and demanding changing attitudes, and the ADA made a whole and connected life possible for her.

People with disabilities and their families are expected to embody suffering in our culture. Initially, this can be very freeing—to be legally punished for our suffering. Depending on past life experiences, the age of onset, and family dynamics, this embrace of suffering can last varying lengths of time and is not a waste of time. It is the plowing of the fields in preparation for the harvest. In coming to terms with the suffering that is a direct result of disability, we are also allowed to look at all the other suffering in our lives and the lives of others. It is in facing and acknowledging our vast connected suffering that compassion is born.

With luck and the right mix of supportive attitudes around us, we eventually become saturated with suffering and finally begin to rise above the pain and self-pity to reconnect. We thereby become members of our community who are present and willing to speak the truth, not just of our experience—the value and necessity of interdependence, supportive systems, humor, diversity, and compassion; the horrors of war, loss, and separation—but of the need to heal the greater community to include these values and realities to the benefit of all.

We cannot know what amazing senators, ministers, grandparents, or street vendors are going to arise from the experience of disability in a way that informs our culture and future generations that changes us forever.

This is what a positive assumption of disability looks like. When we speak in terms of meaningful outcomes, which occur as frequently as hopeless ones (or more often with supportive attitudes in place), and when we leave aside our own fear of experiencing the kinds of losses that people with disabilities have already experienced, then we light the way to real healing.

Deidre Hammon
Reno, Nev.

Heroes—or victims?

Burton Housman's article, "Listening to Lincoln" (FJ Mar.), on the care and attitude toward military wounded or traumatized, should apply to all returning soldiers. We collectively sent them out and we collectively are responsible for trying to heal their traumas, each and every one,

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“War taxes” is a complicated topic

Peter Phillips’ article, “What is the Quaker Testimony on ‘War Taxes?’” (PF Feb.), is problematic in at least four respects.

First, it is not possible to determine from this article the Quaker testimony on war taxes. (That should be no surprise, since it would take a longer treatise to answer that question. An important historical perspective is provided in an amicus brief commissioned by the New York Yearly Meeting in 2007; see <www.cpl.wa/court_docs/usa/jenkins/sc/nyym_amicus.doc.html>.

Second, the author questions whether there is any clear definition of “war taxes.” It would take a more detailed presentation to deal with this important consideration. A persuasive case can be made that “war taxes” can be defined; that there is a larger category, “military taxes,” which can also be defined (military taxes pay for military systems, even when a nation is not engaged in fighting a war); and that there is Quaker testimony concerning each of these.

Third, the author appears to focus principal attention on the issue of war tax resistance (certainly a legitimate focus), but there are three other aspects of Quaker testimony relating to war taxes and military taxes besides war tax resistance. These include (a) keeping one’s income below taxable level; (b) working judicially to persuade the courts to recognize the right of conscientious objection to war taxes and military taxes (bearing in mind that U.S. courts have thus far decided negatively on this issue: see U.S. v. Lee, U.S. Supreme Court, 1982; and Jenkins v. Commissioner of IRS, 2d Circuit Court of Appeals, March 6, 2007); and (c) working legislatively to persuade Congress to establish in law the right of conscientious objection to military taxation (see <www.peacetaxfund.org>).

Fourth, while Phillips’ article principally poses a series of questions, one is left with the impression that the author’s answer to the question posed in the title is that Quakerism, in its communal advice, advises us not to engage in war tax resistance, but to be willing to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s—that war tax resistance is not an effective way to protest war and will have the negative effect of denying funds to constructive societal purposes. Many conscientious objectors to war and to paying for war would not agree with the author on these three points.

I believe that many Quakers (and many others) who are conscientiously opposed to paying for war and for military systems—especially those who have witnessed to those deep convictions for years—would subscribe to the following assertions:

That each of the four ways of expressing one’s conscientious objection to war taxes and military taxes (see the third item, above) is a valid way of expressing one’s peace testimony, and that some persons are led to one and some to another form of those testimonies (or to several of those approaches);

That there are various forms of societal opposition to these expressions of our peace testimony, and these resistances pose a challenge to Quakers and all who uphold these testimonies. Part of expressing one’s peace testimony is to respond with love, clarity, and determination to those who present these resistances, with the hope of persuading them of the validity of our testimony against war and military taxes and against purchases and investments supporting war.

That violence begets violence (including that form of violence which is terrorism), that war and terrorism are extreme expressions of violence, that paying for war is a form of participation in war, and that paying the full amount of one’s federal taxes means that one is paying for war and for military systems, and that each of us must grapple with that fact and resolve it in our conscience; and finally

That there is a growing body of historical evidence (e.g., see A Force More Powerful by P. Ackerman and J. Duvall, 2000) that nonviolent approaches are effective ways of preventing violence and/or responding to violent situations.

No one would assert that nonviolent approaches do not carry risks (including the risk of death to those who follow those approaches), but, in the end, especially in this nuclear age, we must adopt nonviolent ways of preventing and responding to conflicts. This means that we must persuade governments to recognize conscientious objection to paying war taxes and military taxes as a human right, a right that emanates from our First Amendment right of freedom of religious expression, from Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and from Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Peter Phillips has raised a question that deserves our intense study, thought, and prayerful attention.

David R. Bassett
Rochester, N.Y.

David R. Bassett is a member of Rochester (N.Y.) Meeting’s Peace Tax Fund Working Group.

whether they show outward evidence of trauma or keep it well hidden within. But for this involvement in invasion, killing, and indiscriminate bombing, do we bestow on them the title and honor of heroes? If we do, do we owe the same to those who were swept up in prisoner captures and made to do penance in labor camps? After all, they too supported a war effort that set up puppet governments that welcomed them and made civilians fair

The citizens of Germany are well along with this transformation and have incorporated compassion in their attitudes toward the willing and unwilling victims in their midst, and they have taken significant steps towards publicly admitting their collective guilt, offering atonement and reconciliation. Would that this great nation and each and every individual could do the same.

Robert G. Neuhauser
Lancaster, Pa.
The Peace Gathering: An Overview
by Daniel Coppock and Therese Miller

From January 13 through 17, 2009, at Arch Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia, nearly 400 people from 48 Christian denominations and organizations, along with Jewish and Muslim participant-observers, met to participate in Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace. The gathering was hosted by the "Historic Peace Churches" (Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren) but strove to be widely ecumenical on all levels and was designed to deepen our understanding of the Christian gospel of justice and peace and to broaden and strengthen our voices and actions in response to God's call for a peaceful world.

Participants gathered every morning inside the meetinghouse for programmed worship in song and prayer and for teaching through Scripture and sermons. Preachers through the week were Rev. James Forbes (UCC), Colin Saxton (EF Northwest Yearly Meeting), Rev. Matthew Johnson (Baptist), and Bishop Gayle Harris (Episcopalian). Director of music for worship, and throughout the Gathering, was Rev. Elaine Kirkland (UCC).

Panel discussions followed worship each morning, highlighting specific aspects of peacemaking, exploring the faith basis of peace witness, and featuring representatives of faith-based advocacy groups in Washington, D.C. Panelists spoke of their struggles with the complexities of witnessing to a government that ostensibly works towards similar ends, but is separated from God and more than willing to compromise moral principles for practical, contemporary values. On Friday morning we heard reflections from the Muslim and Jewish participant-observers and a teaching from Rabbi Arthur Waskow on his participation the day before in a vigil at the Israeli Embassy, praying and speaking for peace amidst the violence exploding in Gaza.

In the afternoons, at several churches and other gathering points around Old City Philadelphia, there were workshops, small group discussions, and focus groups that formed to discuss a wide variety of national and global issues as well as methods of justice and peacebuilding.
The Holiday Inn across the street hosted several workshops, many meals, and a Gathering bookstore. There were displays and information from a number of organizations from counter-recruitment to pro-life in the East Room of the meetinghouse where there was a steady stream of snacks, hot drinks, and conversation. These enhancements to the gathering nourished and entertained those who needed a break from one part of the gathering or another, feeling uncentered, restless, or perhaps simply unable to sit one more minute on the Arch Street benches!

The plenary speakers, Ched Myers, Alexie Torres-Fleming, and Vincent Harding, each provided witness to the power of faith in action. Ched spoke of the radical nonviolent message of Jesus, highlighting similarities between Jesus’ story and that of Martin Luther King Jr. He encouraged us to see the theological narrative of peacebuilding within the matrix of violence and the power of Empire. Alexie brought this narrative to life, speaking of her experience growing up and working in South Bronx, rebuilding a church after it was destroyed in retaliation for a public witness against the drug culture that was terrorizing the neighborhood.

In the final evening session of the gathering, Vincent Harding spoke of building radical relationships at every level and working against a mentality of “trickle down peace.” He was a friend and colleague of Martin Luther King Jr., and primary speechwriter for his famous “Riverside Sermon.” Vincent Harding accompanied us throughout the week by offering brief reflections and encouragements at the end of each morning, holding participants in the Light and acting as a wisdom guide and elder to the gathering.

Also woven throughout the week was an ongoing public witness to raise visibility of gun shops that walk tight to the line of legality while profiting knowingly and substantially from the illegal gun trade. In support of a weeks-long effort by Philadelphia religious leaders to con-
January 17th. Events on Saturday began with programs held simultaneously at nine different locations around the cities of Philadelphia and Chester. Forty-one local Partner Faith Communities joined together to plan and offer these morning programs of prayer, education, and action with speakers from local community organizations, city and state governments, hospitals, schools, police departments, and more. The day culminated in a plenary worship service, march, and rally in front of Colosimo’s gun shop by nearly 1,000 participants from local faith communities as well as Peace Gathering participants.

The gathering, which had been in planning for nearly two years, was designed to be not-your-usual conference. It was intentionally named a “gathering” and envisioned as a place where participants would worship and work together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to develop new bonds, new ideas, and new energy for the work of building peace in themselves, their cities, the nation, and the world. All indications are that gathering participants were exercised, stretched, opened, and filled by the Spirit as they labored together to hear and heed God’s call.

Most importantly, participants continue to report stories of personal change, conviction, hearing the Gospel with new ears, and rekindling of passion of Christian justice and peacemaking. A Spirit-filled event, the gathering has encouraged new—and renewed—work for peace and justice and infused new energy and hope into the lives and work of many. We are only now beginning to see and hear and know of the fruit that is being born of seeds that were sown in Philadelphia in January!

Ched Myers, a theologian, teacher, author, and organizer, has worked with many peace and justice organizations and movements, including American Friends Service Committee, Pacific Concerns Resource Center, and Pacific Life Community. He is currently with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, where he focuses on building capacity for biblical literacy, church renewal, and faith-based witness for justice. This article is based on his presentation to the Peace Gathering on January 13.


If our Peace Gathering is going to be more than a sentimental pining for peaceableness, then we’d better start by rediscovering the resonance between Jesus and Martin Luther King.

Our world has never been more in need of courageous and creative alternatives to violence and injustice. Street crime, police abuse, and domestic violence are epidemic, while there has never been a time in history more militarized. More people are enslaved today than two centuries ago, and poverty is the number one killer around the globe. Torture seems to have again become acceptable, and the powerful entertainment culture that shapes hearts and minds each day is ruled by the gun and the myth of redemptive violence. From personal alienation and family abuse to urban uprisings and social prejudice, and from a domestic war against immigrants to an international war against real and imagined terrorism, we are caught in an escalating spiral of violence.

Martin Luther King Jr. remains the most compelling modern representative in the United States of faith-rooted nonviolence. As Trappist monk Thomas Merton put it in 1968, the Civil Rights Movement was “one of the most positive and successful expressions of Christian social action that has been seen anywhere in the 20th century. It is certainly the greatest example of Christian faith in action in the social history of the United States.” Ten days before King was killed, the great U.S. Rabbi Abraham Heschel asserted that the very future of our country might well depend upon how the legacy of this extraordinary man would be handled. But King is, as Vincent Harding has written, an “inconvenient hero” for our church and our nation. “If the untroubled King and his peace-disturbing vision, words, and deeds hold the key to the future of America,” Harding says, “then we owe ourselves, our children, and our nation a far more serious exploration and comprehension of the man and the widespread movement with which he was identified.”

This past year we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the murder, in Memphis, of our greatest prophet. As another of Martin Luther King Jr.’s col-

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Jesus of Nazareth. The por-
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olutionary message typically reduced to a vague and sentimental sound-bite, in which his "dream" can mean anything to anyone.

This is germane because the same thing can be said about Jesus of Nazareth. The portrait we get in the Gospels—of an anointed man who ministered among the poor, relentlessly challenged the rich and powerful, and was executed as a political dissident—is a far cry from the stained-glass-window Christ we encounter in many churches. This brings me an observation from James W. Lawson. One of King's closest colleagues in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Lawson continues to work tirelessly in the tradition of nonviolent activism for social justice. "If you want to understand King," Lawson asserts, "you must look at Jesus."

Lawson was acknowledging that King was a committed Christian disciple who understood the call of the Gospel as a vocation of advocacy for the oppressed, of love for adversaries, and of nonviolent resistance to injustice. King can't be understood apart from his faith. He organized his movement in church basements, prayed as he picketed, sang gos-
pel hymns in jail, preached to Presidents, and challenged other church leaders to join him. But Lawson was saying more than this. He was alluding to the undeniable, if uncomfortable, parallels between the Jesus story and the ministry of spiritual and social identity and renewal, which included practices of nonviolent resistance to injustice:

- both of these prophets spent time listening to the pain of the dispossessed and broken among their own people, and fiercely advocating on their behalf;
- both worked to build popular move-

ments of nonviolent resistance to injustice. King, of course, drew his "Beloved Community" in ways that got them into trouble with local, national, and imperial authorities;
- each was widely perceived as operating in the biblical prophetic tradition by both allies and adversaries;
- both animated dramatic public protests that resulted in arrest and jail;
- both were deemed such a threat to na-
tional security that their inner circles were infiltrated by government informers; and,
- in the end, both were killed because of their work and witness.

These parallels have been oddly ab-
sent from the abstract theological de-
bates as to whether or not Jesus was a "pacifist," or whether he was politically engaged, so they are worth exploring.

Too many Christians apprehend Jesus in a highly spiritualized way, ignoring the fact that he lived and died in times that were as contentious and conflicted as our own. I would contend that even our Peace Churches have fall-

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ents of spiritual and social identity and renewal, which included practices of nonviolent resistance to injustice;
Mark was shaped deeply by the "spirit of violence": structural oppression, reactive violence, and counter-reactive military suppression. It is a scenario, sadly, that remains all too familiar in our world.

Let us note a few things about Mark's prologue, which, unlike Luke and Matthew and your church's Christmas pageant, has no miraculous birth narrative to introduce Jesus. Instead we meet the main character in the wild waters of the River Jordan. It is significant that of all the mentors Jesus might have chosen to "initiate" him, he makes his way to John the Baptist, a notorious wilderness prophet and political dissident whom Herod Antipas executed around the year 20 C.E. Indeed, Mark reports matter-of-factly that Jesus' public ministry begins "after John is arrested by Herod" (1:14). That Jesus publicly identifies with this feral, Elijah-type figure, whose days are numbered because of his vocation of speaking truth to power, not only makes the Nazarene complicit in John's rebel movement, but also notes a sort of "passing of the torch" in a prophetic revival movement.

An analogy to Martin Luther King can shed light on the importance of Jesus' "alignment." Mark wrote roughly 40 years after the deaths of John the Baptist and, shortly after, Jesus of Nazareth. While that ancient world seems remote to us, the world of Memphis in April 1968 is not. We now know there was a government conspiracy to silence King's prophetic voice, and his assassination.

Church gathering were to align itself publicly with this Dr. King—not the domesticated saint, but the radical critic of empire—in our current moment of foreign intervention, it would probably be controversial in many of our churches back home. I think that would be a great idea, by the way; but in any case, the analogy helps us understand the subversive power of Jesus' identification with John the Baptist.

It is also significant that Mark's story of Jesus begins in the wilderness, reminding us of the origins of Israel's faith: the God of Exodus stands outside civilization, undomesticated and free. YHWH is best encountered at the margins, which is why immediately after Jesus' baptism by John, the Spirit "drives" him
deeper into the wilderness. This 40-day sojourn may be understood as a sort of vision quest. Jesus mystically retraces the footsteps of his ancestors back to their mythical place of origin, in order to discover where they were tempted and strayed from the way YHWH had given them. Thus, from the outset of Mark's story, there is a spatial tension between the existing world order, which is controlled by the Jerusalem and Roman elite, and the radical renewal of Israelite identity brewing in the wilderness.

The locales that appear in the Gospel narrative all had their own stories of imperial oppression and resistance. Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, lay a mere three miles southwest of Sephoris, the Herodian capital of Lower Galilee. After Herod the Great's death in 4 B.C.E., a major Judean insurrection broke out, and one of the most important skirmishes was the sacking of the royal armory at Sephoris. In retaliation, Varus, the Roman legate of Syria, razed the city. Herod Antipas then rebuilt the city in the Hellenistic style and named it Autocratis—literally "belonging to the Emperor"—all of which took place as Jesus was growing up. If Jesus labored as a carpenter or construction worker in Nazareth, it is highly likely that he got work as a young man rebuilding Sephoris, one hour's walk away. The revolt, and the destruction and reconstruction of this imperial city, would have had a profound impact on his consciousness.

The Sea of Galilee, which is the narrative center of gravity in Mark's story, is a large freshwater lake, dotted with villages connected with the local fishing industry, the backbone of the region's economy. When Jesus was a teenager, Caesar Augustus died and Tiberius ascended the throne in Rome. To curry the new emperor's favor, local tyrant Herod Antipas began building a new, imperial, state-of-the-art capital city called Tiberias—on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. There he built a royal palace, where it is likely he beheaded John the Baptist. The primary function of this city was to regulate the fishing industry around the Sea of Galilee, putting it firmly under the control of Roman interests. The construction work at Tiberias may have drawn Jesus to the Sea from Nazareth, and as an itinerant laborer he would have moved up the coast from harbor to harbor. This explains how Jesus appears in Capernaum, a major harbor and an important center of the fishing trade, at the beginning of Mark's story.

The elite controlled the fishing industry in three ways. They sold fishing leases, without which locals like Peter and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee in Mk 1:16ff, could not work. They taxed the catch and its processing, and levied tolls on product transport. Local administrators handled these leases, contracts, and taxes—such as "Levi son of Alphaeus," whom we meet in Mk 2:14. And the elite steadily restructured the industry for export, so that the majority of fish caught were salt preserved or made into fish sauce and shipped to distant markets throughout the empire. All this functioned to impoverish formerly self-sufficient local fishing families, who fell to the bottom of an increasingly elaborate economic hierarchy. "The fisher," attests one ancient Egyptian papyrus, "is more miserable than any other profession." It was not unlike the story of coffee-growing campesinos in Central America today, or gold miners in Africa with which we are familiar.

With such rigid state control of their livelihood and the oppressive economics of export, it is hardly surprising that in Mark's story, fishermen are the first to convert to Jesus' message about an alternative social vision. If Tiberias was ground zero in Herod's project of Romanizing the regional economy, then Capernaum, a village profoundly impacted by such policies, was the logical place to commence building a movement of resistance, organizing restless peasant fishermen who had little to lose and everything to gain. This is analogous to Gandhi's attempts to mobilize the Untouchables in India in campaigns such as the Salt March, or to King's outreach to young, disaffected blacks after the urban uprisings of the mid-1960s. "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people'" (Mk 1:17b). Jesus is invoking a prophetic metaphor that appears often in the Hebrew Bible. Jeremiah envisions YHWH "sending for many fishermen" in order to catch the wayward people of Israel. (Jer 16:16-18) The prophet Amos warns the elite classes of Israel that YHWH will haul them away like sardines to judgment: And Ezekiel's rant against Pharaoh denounces the empire's delusion that it "owns" the Nile: God vows to yank the "dragon" of Egypt right out of the River, "hook, line, and sinker," along with all the fish that it claims exclusive rights to (Ez 29:5f). Jesus—who knew the prophetic literature and sought to embody it anew in his context—was using an idiom that "exposed and provoked" the conflict in order to address it. To use modern parlance, he was sum-

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moning these marginalized workers to join him in "catching some Big Fish" and restoring God's justice for the poor. The revered evangelical image of being a "fisher of men," therefore, is better understood in the sense of King's motto of the SCLC: they were struggling "for the soul of America."

No wonder, then, that in Jesus' very first public action (Mk 1:21-29), conflict erupts in an exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue. The crowd is astonished at Jesus' teaching, for he had authority, unlike the scribes. This story articulates a central issue: who exercises authority over hearts and minds? An unclean spirit protests Jesus' presence: "Why do you meddle with us?" (1:23f); "Have you come to destroy us?" The "we" on whose behalf the demon speaks is likely the scribal class, whose "space" Jesus is invading. It's perhaps like the resistance Jesus would get in our churches if his initial message to us were: "Turn off your televisions and computers so you can listen to God!"

This inaugural episode is characteristic of every one of Jesus' healings in Mark. He intervenes on behalf of the "political body" of a sick or possessed person in a way that personally liberates, even as it raises larger questions of justice in the "political" Jesus addresses specific conditions and seeks root causes of why people are silenced or marginalized. This is why his healings and exorcisms are interpreted either as liberation or as lawless defiance, depending upon one's status within the prevailing social order. Jesus' first exorcism articulates his diagnosis of this situation of oppression: the monopoly that those in power hold over popular spiritual and political imagination must be broken in order to animate a movement of change.

The power of strategic social analysis and inspiring proclamation of new possibilities is what is needed to tap into latent dissatisfaction among oppressed people and fire their hopes for a better world. We see this in Martin Luther King, whose preaching mobilized African Americans who had never accepted Jim Crow, but had been resigned to its apparent invincibility. It was as much through his public proclamation as through his street actions that King the peacemaker became a local, then regional, then national "troublemaker."

Jesus then withdraws to the fishermen's hut, where they draw his attention to Peter's ill mother-in-law. There was a high correlation between sickness and poverty in Mark's world—and ours. Though culturally inappropriate for a non-religious Jesus, touches Peter's mother, raising her up. Word spreads like wildfire, and soon "the whole village" gathers at the humble, and no doubt smelly, threshold of the shack (1:32f). Jesus' mission of compassion and solidarity to the masses has commenced. But he is careful to heal publicly only after the Sabbath has concluded—he is not yet ready to engage that issue.

We encounter another dimension of Jesus' rhythm when he withdraws to the wilderness for a time of prayer and reflection (1:35). Disengagement for purposes of centering and contemplation is crucial for nonviolent leaders, essential if one is to resist pressures to compromise, self-aggrandize, or just give up. Gandhi steadfastly practiced and promoted prayer and fasting as integral to satyagraha. Martin Luther King drew deeply on the mystical spirituality of Howard Thurman; he reportedly kept a copy of Thurman's Jesus and the Disinherited with him wherever he went. Disciplines of meditation and prayer are embraced by all great faith-rooted apostles of nonviolent action, from Cesar Chavez and Oscar Romero to Dorothy Day and Julia Esquivel.

Jesus returns to action when challenged by a leper to "declare him clean" (1:40-45). Jesus' willingness to have social contact with this leper is subversive enough, given the contagious nature of the impurity. But given the fact that diagnosing and curing skin diseases were the exclusive domain of priests (Lev. 13-14), Jesus' intervention would have been problematic, analogous to practicing without a license today in the context of a healthcare system monopolized by doctors, hospitals, and medical-legal codes. The leper's solicitation of Jesus implies there was a crisis in the organic health system of first-century Jewish Palestine. He was either disillusioned with the care he received from the local priest or was questioning his second-class status. Either suffices to explain Jesus' reaction of gut-wrenching compassion: he touches the leper and presumes the priestly prerogative of declaring him clean. This sets up another crisis: while Mark reports that "the leprosy left him" (1:42), public perception would have presumed that Jesus had contracted the disease.

The epilogue to the story is telling. Jesus ennobles the leper by dispatching him to "make a witness against" the priestly system by essentially paying for services not rendered (1:44). The man is not up to this protest, however, and instead spectacularizes the intervention by sending out a press release. As a result, Jesus has to go underground as a transgressor of multiple social boundaries (1:45). This vignette suggests—as do countless other biblical tales, such as Moses' constant frustration with his
people along the Exodus—that organizing poor people can be difficult, unpredictable, and often unruly. Not everyone wishes to change, and many are content to settle for small improvements in their personal lot instead of joining the broader struggle for greater good.

The next healing again deals with the political body in terms of the body politic. Instead of simply curing the paralytic, Jesus challenges the system by unilaterally releasing him from sin/debt (2:5). The scribes object vehemently, claiming that only God can forgive (2:7). But this is a defense of their own social power, since as interpreters of Torah they determined the protocols by which people were released from sin/debt. Jesus defies their warning, asserting for the first time the counter-authority of the “Human One” (2:8-11), a revolutionary moniker he adopts from the prophetic book of Daniel. The episode concludes similarly to the opening sequence with the amazement of the crowd (2:12), indeed with a moment of worshipful awe. This is different, people are thinking. Hope is rising.

These two stories about the ancient Purity code and Debt code address what we today would call the healthcare and the criminal justice systems respectively. Jesus questions three key aspects of how power is distributed:

- the power to diagnose illness or interpret legal codes;
- the power to change someone’s status in the system (treatment/adjudication);
- and

in debates with priests or scribes, who are senior administrators of (and spokespeople for) the status quo, Jesus is involved in nonviolent direct action. Disturbing the peace by articulating oppressive conditions is obviously threatening to those whose status and identity are bound to the dominant social codes and structures.

King’s work, too, centered around advocacy on behalf of those for whom the U.S. social system was not working. From the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-56 to the Memphis sanitation workers strike in 1968, King’s visits to the rural South and urban North, to Watts and Appalachia, were no mere photo opportunities. He genuinely solicited the views of economically and racially marginalized people. His plan for a Poor People’s March on Washington represented the pinnacle of his vision of social inclusion. More than any other aspect of his ministry, King’s tenacious politics of solidarity was what made him dangerous in the eyes of the authorities. It is what put him on the path of inevitable conflict with the Powers, as it did Jesus.

Jesus’ next encounter is with Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax office (2:14). One of Levi’s main tasks would have been to sell and regulate fishing leases, making this brief discipleship call story an interesting counterpoint to Jesus’ recruitment of the fishermen in 1:16-20. What a remarkable strategy: Jesus challenges not only the oppressed to join his movement, but street-level oppressors as well! This odd coupling in the discipleship community is predicated, however, upon a change in social and economic practice. So the next scene is Levi’s house—doubtless a contrast to Peter’s fisherman’s abode! Here Mark paints a portrait of debtors and
Ji

Jesus and John the Baptist (2:18). Jesus' who couldn't afford to conform to the solution. In this case, the issue was sequence, returning to the central issue of Sabbath (2:23-28). This time the

sequence concludes with Jesus' protest concerning the politics of food in Palestine. Each episode illustrates a different aspect of what we call "Sabbath economics"—the Torah vision of fundamental economic fairness. Jesus is unmasking how access to sustenance and to agricultural wealth was inequitably distributed in first century Judean society.

The Pharisees are introduced to the story here. (2:16,18,23) They were leaders of a renewal movement whose strategy was to promote and facilitate popular ability to meet Purity and Debt obligations and Torah piety. They figure prominently in these food controversies because of their key role in regulating production, distribution, and consumption of agricultural products in Jewish Palestine. It needs to be emphasized here that the struggle between Jesus and the Pharisees was an internecine conflict over proper understanding of Torah and Sabbath practice. It is not articulating an opposition of "Christian vs. Jew" or "grace vs. law," as it has too often been understood in the long and bloody Christian history of supersessionism. In this case, the issue was Pharisaic control over planting and harvesting, marketing and eating, which was resented by many subsistence peasants who could not afford to conform to the rules of holiness.

The fasting debate represents an escalation of tensions, with the authorities going on the offensive. In a fascinating glimpse of "movement politics" in the first century, the Pharisees attempt to drive a wedge between the followers of Jesus and John the Baptist (2:18). Jesus' response invokes a banquet metaphor, implying that the poor need shared abundance, not the religious abstinence or ritual piety of the privileged (2:19). He then warns that the old cannot hold the new. (2:21f) So, too, Martin Luther King issued dramatic calls to change: "The choice is ours," King said in his closing remarks at Riverside Church. "And though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

The next episode completes the food sequence, returning to the central issue of Sabbath (2:23-28). This time the

authorities may also, however, be accusing them of stealing, since this seems to be the subject of Jesus' response. Jesus' sarcastic quip ("Have you never read...?") prepares us for an ingenious bit of midrash. In this way, he draws attention to a story in which the insurgent guerilla fighter David and his followers commandeer the sacred showbread from a local sanctuary (2:25f; see I Sam. 21:1-6; Lev. 24:5-9). The implication is that the actions of his disciples pale in comparison to the Israelite hero David's violation of cultic vessels. Moreover, he adds a telling rationale to the account: they expropriated bread because they were hungry (2:25b). This represents an allusion to the Torah principle of gleaner's rights: the edges of every field belong to the needy poor and sojourner (Ex. 23:22f; Lev. 23:22f). Against the Pharisees' reductive ethic, focused on keeping the Sabbath holy via prohibition, Jesus pits an expansive ethic, reauthorizing the work of gleaners on the Sabbath as the divinely ordained right of hungry people.

Mark's three food stories narrate a campaign of conscientization and direct action aimed at recovering the ethos of Sabbath Economics. This is made explicit in Jesus' summary assertion (2:27), which can be paraphrased: "The economics to most Christians in capitalist cultures, it is good news for the poor, then and now.

We can now understand why by the second synagogue showdown (Mk 3:1-6), the elites want Jesus neutralized. The episode is structured as a kind of trial scene: in the public glare the authorities stand poised, ready for the suspect to "cross the line" (3:2). In a sort of Deuteronomic ultimatum (Deut. 30:15ff), however, Jesus turns from defendant to prosecutor (3:4). His query in 3:4 ("Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?") reiterates the great Mosaic exhortation to the people on the cusp of the Promised Land: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:19). Conversely, Jesus' anger (Greek org. 3:5) at the silence of his adversaries echoes YHWH's anger (Greek orgi kuri) if the Covenant is broken (Deut. 29:20).

In the classic tradition of civil disobedience, Jesus proceeds to break the law in order to raise deeper issues about the moral health of the community (3:5). He restores a withered hand to its proper, stretched out position of generosity, as exhorted in Deut. 15. This summary
Both Jesus and King chose nonviolent love without compromising their insistence upon justice. They believed that the movement for God's Beloved Community was worth giving their lives to.

The crisis between Jesus and the authorities has escalated significantly between the two synagogue episodes in Mark 1 and 3. The narrative establishes a pattern for Jesus' ministry that prevails through the rest of Mark's story. He and his disciples shuttle between a polarized cast of characters: on one hand the skeletal elites, on the other the needy and importunate crowds, for whom illness, disability, and indebtedness were an inseparable part of the cycle of poverty. The settings of Mark's story paint an accurate portrait of the in the murderous disparity of wealth.

In the first part of this campaign, Jesus challenges interpretations of Torah that rationalize the status quo (1:21-28) and transgresses social boundaries to bring personal and political wholeness to the impure and indebted (2:1-12). In the second sequence, he brings debt collectors and debtors together in Jubilee fellowship (2:13-17); insists that the poor's involuntary “fasting” must be relieved (2:18-22); legitimizes the right of hungry people to glean (2:23-28); and climaxes the campaign with an act of civil disobedience that indicts his prosecutors for failing to practice Sabbath Economics (3:1-6).

Like Jesus at Levi's house, the modern Civil Rights Movement discovered the subversive power of a strategic meal. On February 1st, 1960, four black college students walked into a Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat down at the “whites only” lunch counter, and waited to be served. Their protest went on for days, gaining national attention, and within six weeks sit-in demonstrations had spread to ten southern states. Ultimately, more than 75,000 students, both black and white, participated throughout the country, giving a huge push to the movement.

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As we are gathered together in worship, I am reminded of the words from the prophet Zechariah who called God's people "prisoners of hope." May we become prisoners to hope, rather than being imprisoned by fear or anger or discouragement. May we be so captured by God's love and grace that we are empowered in new and stirring ways.

Hope is one of those funny theological words that we are tempted to think of as an idea or a feeling when it is really an action. From the perspective of the Bible, it is an active trust and expectant confidence that arises out of our experience of God's overwhelming mercy for us and God's goodness toward creation. Hope isn't something I lose like a set of car keys, but rather, I would suggest, that it is always out in front of us, just beyond arm's length. It is a mystery that draws us. It calls to us and is waiting to meet us, but only long enough to move us forward once more. So we keep hope alive as we continue to move toward it, and in doing so, we find ourselves more deeply dependent on God and in greater harmony with God's intended future.

When we begin to talk about peace and justice, we are unearthing one of the great hopes expressed in Scripture. In the creation story, Shalom and Justice serve as the matrix in which God initially animates the world—or at least tries to. For no sooner had God gotten the cosmos unwrapped and out of the box when problems developed. We showed up. And instead of humanity moving toward the hopeful vision of right relationship with God, with each other, with ourselves, and with the creation, we opt—and have very often continued to opt—to move away from that first great hope. But God, for reasons I cannot always understand, is relentless in pursuing this vision with us. And so throughout the whole history of God, as it is recorded in the Bible, we find both powerful metaphors and concrete examples of what it can mean and must mean for humanity to choose hope.

Listen with me a moment to the way the prophet Micah describes this for us. I chose Micah because, unlike his much more famous counterparts, he was a pretty ordinary person. As far as we know he had no political clout, no name recognition, and no position of leadership. He doesn't even get to live in the big city. He's just a peace worker stationed out in some podunk town. Micah was a nobody and—I say this with a great deal of love and respect—just like most of us here today. Just one ordinary person with nothing more than a burning hope, born out of a deep love and devotion to God, coupled with a keen awareness that the world around him was not at all as God intended it to be.

Read over Micah and notice the real struggle going on in him. As he is speaking his message of truth, Micah comes dangerously close to despair and hopelessness. Maybe it is simple anger and frustration. Or maybe it was just the weight and the pain of it all. It is as if the future fate of humanity was balanced on him, as if the serious problems and the concerns of the real people he loved and lived with were on the verge of overwhelming him. I suspect some of you know a good bit about that sort of struggle and weight.

As I said, Micah knew well the problems of his day. He sees the shameless greed and land-grabbing of the rich. He calls out false prophets for glossing over injustice and using their positions and titles to get rich. He grieves over the idolatry and the shallow spirituality that tried to turn the sovereign God of cre-
And live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace!

We sometimes think of hope as an idea or a feeling when it is really an action.

God—that's good! But what I find so compelling in Micah's vision is not just the ideal, but the realism the undergirds it. His is a sturdy hope. Micah can see the hopeful vision of the future to be sure. He has a clear picture of the beloved community when our daily prayer

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begin with a renewed version of the blessing traditionally offered before learning Torah—sharing wisdom—together:

Blessed are you the breath of life, the inter-breathing Spirit of the universe, who breathes into us the wisdom to know that we become holy by breathing together, by shaping our breath into words, and by shaping our words so that they aim towards wisdom.

Baruch atah Yahh elohenu ruach ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvot, vitzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.

With gathering director Therese Miller's permission, I played hooky from the Gathering yesterday. I had gotten a phone call from Washington on Wednesday asking if I would take part in a vigil at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. And after groaning and gulping and asking Therese if she felt okay about my being released from my obligation to be here, I went. There were about 50 of us dressed in black, mourning, grieving. We were mourning the deaths of Israelis and the deaths of many, many more Palestinians. And I spoke there with a story I want to share with you.

It's the story of Joshua crossing over the Jordan into the land of Canaan with the mission blazing within him that it was God's will to make this into the Land of Israel. And he's suddenly confronted by a strange and mysterious figure, a messenger from God—an angel—and Joshua shouts, "Are you for us or our enemies?"

I've known this story a long time, but it came to mind because this week I read an article written by an Israeli nationalist who, quoting Joshua, asked that question twice in his article defending the Israeli invasion of Gaza: "Are you for us or our enemies?" He thought the obvious answer for his readers was, "For you, of course!"

But he left out—or forgot, or ignored—the angel's answer. The angel answered, "No!"

Not "Yes, I am for you and for your enemies"—because that would still be an endorsement of hostility. "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "No," God's answer.

And that's where we were when we gathered at the Embassy. If there had been an office of Hamas in Washington, we would have gone there too. We
that army, but out of compassion for the dead and traumatized on both sides of the border and for their suffering.

If we look beyond that urgent question of the Gaza-Israel war, there's another tale from Torah we can learn from. In fact, it's in the portion we read just last week, from the end of the book of Genesis, where Jacob brings together two of his grandsons—Ephraim and Menasheh—criss-crossing his hands so the older gets the younger's blessing and the younger gets the older one's blessing. But they get the blessing at the same time, and it's the same blessing for them both: "Forever and ever may the children of our people be blessed to be like Ephraim and Menasheh." And still, 3,000 years later, that's how we bless our children.

What happened at that moment? Here was the culmination, the final case, of the brothers' struggles that run all through Genesis; but this one was very different. In each of the others, the warring brothers are ultimately reconciled: Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers. But it takes decades in every case. Decades of alienation, conflict, anger, fear, before they are reconciled.

But Jacob, who has himself been through this process, dissolves it all between his two grandchildren in a single moment, by bringing them together himself. He doesn't leave it to the two of them. He himself intervenes— brings his authority— moral and, you might say, political. He has more power than they, and he has the moral authority to do it.

I share this with you because these two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, so filled by fear and rage that it is almost impossible for them to reconcile. If the two of them must straighten it out alone, there may have to be perhaps decades of more war, more death, more suffering.

There is only one power in the world today that has both the political strength and now, perhaps (after the Presidential inauguration), the moral authority to bring those peoples and all the warring families of that family of Abraham together to make peace. That power is perhaps the United States of America in the Obama administration. But it will not happen automatically, and it seems to me there is only one source of the energy in U.S. society capable of making it happen— because without the application of a strong public will, the U.S. government's habit of letting it be will just go on. Who has such passion for the region, such deep memories of it, such a sense of sacred space there and such deep emotional connections to the people who live there? The only force capable of making that change— the only people who care enough about that stretch of Earth and who could, if they work together, have the political clout to make a difference— are the Christians, the Muslims, and the Jews of the United States. (Of course, there is one other section of U.S. society that cares passionately about that region, and that's Big Oil.)

Now among Jews, among Christians, and among Muslims it is not so simple— let alone between them. In each group there are those who essentially support the ongoing war, and the question is whether we, who stand with one leg outside the carnage but with our hearts and minds in part within it— can we, the tiny percentage that is represented here in this very room, the tiny crystal of our Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities— can we come together to make that change? Because no President can make that change on his (or one day her) own.

There still remains for me to say what I originally promised I would say— and that comes from three bits of teaching from our three traditions. One of them is one you all know extremely well, I hope: the story of Jesus confronted, according to the three Gospels, by some troublemaking Pharisees.

Joshua is suddenly confronted by a strange and mysterious figure, and he shouts, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"No," the angel answers.

au, Joseph and his brothers. But it takes decades in every case. Decades of alienation, conflict, anger, fear, before they are reconciled.

But Jacob, who has himself been through this process, dissolves it all between his two grandchildren in a single moment, by bringing them together himself. He doesn't leave it to the two of them. He himself intervenes— bringing his authority— moral and, you might say, political. He has more power than they, and he has the moral authority to do it.

I share this with you because these two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians,
Listen and Affirming

by Carol Towarnicky

For me, "Heeding God's Call" felt like just that, a call—except that it came by email. The invitation from Rabbi Phyllis Berman to be a Jewish observer/participant at the peace gathering had come only a few weeks after I had returned from a human rights trip to Israel with 40 other people from the United States, most of them Jews. Now I and three other members of my synagogue, Mishkan Shalom in Philadelphia, were struggling to discern how to share what we had learned.

Listen.

The title of the workshop jumped out at me: How can I Engage the "Other" in Public Dialog Without Perpetuating Violence? This was something I craved to know. Like many people, I have several "others" in my life, although most are not personal acquaintances. As a newspaper editorial writer and columnist by trade, I'm used to having a forum to express my opinions—at length, without interruption. Debate, when it comes, comes later and in written form, and rarely develops into dialogue.

Yet much of what one of my editors calls "fan mail," reveals the "others" out there: Those who dismiss evolution as a theory, who insist that the Bible is the source of something called "Islamofascism," that torture can be moral or necessary, that climate change is a hoax, that there is a war against Christmas, that the poor are lazy, that guns don't kill people.

Listen.

I was mildly disappointed when Bonnie Tinker, the founder of Oregon-based Love Makes a Family (www.LMFamily.org), revealed that the first step of the process she developed to talk to the "other" is... Listen. Bonnie, who co-led the workshop with Rita Clinto, also of Oregon, created a process she calls LARA in 1992 to help people defend against an anti-LGBT initiative in her state. I could only imagine how such a task could cut deeply to questions of identity and vulnerability, and the desire to either rage or run.

Shouldn't it demand something more powerful than Listen?

Then, though, Bonnie revealed the second step—Affirm—and something clicked into place. What Bonnie and Rita were prescribing was a listening geared to finding something with which you agree in what your antagonist has said, some connection between you and the "other," which of course requires that you believe there is one to find.

There are four steps to LARA—Listen, Affirm, Respond, and Add—and they're all important, but I was still focused on the Listen and Affirm—actually, Listen to Affirm. Did I ever listen that way?

As Bonnie explained, engaging the "other" requires that you show respect for the humanity of the person you are speaking to.

"The moral ground you are standing on is big enough for all," she says. "If you take up all of the moral ground by backing others into a corner, by forcing them up against the wall or pushing them over the edge of a verbal precipice, they cannot join you in your opinion.

"Building common ground assumes that people share at least one value in common—the desire to do the right thing."

Listen.

Listen—Sh'ma in Hebrew—is the first word of the central prayer in Judaism. Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai Echad, "Listen (or hear) O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one."

Jews say the Sh'ma, exhorting themselves to "listen," several times a day, to listen and really hear the message that everything and everybody is one. That brand of listening, the kind in which you're listening for a connection, for a shared experience or goal, is difficult, but just the attempt feels transformative.

There's a Hebrew word for it—Rabbanus, which is sometimes translated as "compassion"—a call to attribute to everyone the best of intentions.

In the weeks since the workshop, I have struggled to listen in this deep way, to remember the phrases Bonnie Tinker offered to get us started. "I also care about..." "I agree with you that..." "I think you are right about..." I even tried it with old "fan mail," looking for something in the messages that I could affirm, and often finding them—and glimpsing the possibility that, in reality, there is no true "other."
I remember being puzzled when I was 13 about the closing lines of Romans read today. The part that says, “Vengeance is God’s, if your enemies are hungry feed them, if they are thirsty give them something to drink, for by helping them you will be heaping burning coals on their heads.”

Now, envisioning this as a 13-year-old, it sounded like vengeance to me. What a way to get back at people. And it’s okay with God. Burning them up, destroying them with kindness: Ah, how delicious! Denying their power over me with my own kind of deceit. Sort of the classic passive-aggressiveness that is best served up by teenagers. But even in my raging hormones, I knew I was twisting the passage and distorting its full meaning. I was putting my often vengeful adolescent spin on it. I knew in the back of my mind God was not asking me to destroy my enemies nor to destroy the meaning of the Scriptures.

This passage came back to me in 2002 while reading a New York Times article. There was a quote by a White House aide to George W. Bush himself, who said with much hubris and much self-serving adolescent glee, “We are in charge, we are an empire now, and while we create our reality and while you’re trying to deal with that reality we’ll create another, and while you’re thinking about that, we’ll create another and another reality.”

Since 9/11, it seems that this Scripture (Romans 12:19: “Do not take revenge my friends”) we’ve heard today has been relegated to the back alleys of our government’s memory. For the past eight years we’ve had an administration that says it has an evangelical and “moral recovery” agenda, but it has produced and thrived on fear and power, embracing a killing war on terror, and making more innocent victims in Afghanistan and Iraq—more have been killed there than in the terrible destruction of 9/11.

We have been thriving on fear and it seems that drives us towards military solutions. Today’s reality, one created by the polities and policies of our government, I feel is more reflected in Isaiah 59:

The way of peace they do not know and there is no justice in their peace. The roads they have made crooked, no one who walks in them knows peace, therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We wait for light and lo there is darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope along a wall groping like those who have no eyes. We all grow like bears. Like doves we all moan mournfully. We wait for justice but there is none, for salvation but it is far from us. Talking oppression and revolt. Conceiving lying words and uttering them from the heart. Justice is turned back and righteousness stands at a distance. For truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and whoever turns from evil is despooled.

Is that not the society we live in? Where even questioning our government is seen as unpatriotic? Missiles, landmines, suicide bombers—these are the burning coals we have heaped today. The bloodlust between Hamas and Israel. The Sudanese government and that of Darfur, the bloodlust we see in Pakistan and India and Afghanistan. Between Sunni, Shi’a, and Hindu; between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. These lusts are the burning coals of today. The violence towards women and children, the lack of care for our environment and Earth—these are coals too. Our apathy, our racism, our sexism, our homophobia are burning coals. Greed, deceit, bigotry, ignorance, oppression, and injustice, and even our denial of ourselves being
to one affects the other, even when we deny it. We are connected, we are woven in this life and we cannot remove the coals destroying us unless we do it together. A priest of our church, Sam Portaro, writes, "When we are all attuned to our gifts, our interests, and our abilities, and we are in conversation with our communities, we begin to understand that which is asked of us. When we combine with the strength of others, we will have enough." My brothers and sisters, what is being asked of us in this moment in time is to stop heaping coals on ourselves, on each other, on our brothers and sisters on this planet, our island home.

We need to join with our enemies, we need to be with them—real and imagined—to welcome the stranger, to clothe the naked, to journey and abide and care for each other. All of us must do this and ultimately must work for justice, must thirst for it as we do for water on a hot summer's day, must hunger for peace as we hunger at the smell of apple pie cooking.

To thirst for God's justice means first of all that justice is not our definition of fairness and judgment. God's justice is mercybonded with compassion. It is the water needed for life; it attends to the basic human dignity that we all carry from the water from which God created life. It is as essential and elemental as any ingredient of life, and without it we pant and are parched and are only dust. No life on this planet can exist without water, nothing can take root or grow or thrive—and neither can human beings without the water of justice because without it there can not and will not be peace. Martin Luther King Jr., who we celebrate this weekend, said, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.

The waters of justice, they can extinguish the flamer of violence and they can move us, the waters of justice, from monologue to dialogue. We must be porters of the water of justice and prisoners of the hope of peace."

Now as the descendant of slaves, I don't have to tell you that I don't feel comfortable being a porter or a prisoner. It brings to mind the role and status of the disenfranchised, the powerless, the outcast. But if I don't embrace these roles—the porter and the prisoner—then I am powerless to change and transform myself and the world around me. Jesus challenges me with the paradox of a king who could be a victor, yet who came on a donkey to identify with the lowly. That is the paradox for those of us who love to think of our free will and our democracy. God is calling us to be porters of the water of justice, and prisoners of the hope of peace. God calls us to be like him who was a suffering servant who, humble and without an army, brought release to all, that we might be captive to God's vision of peace in this world.

Our ultimate allegiance is not to the tremendous power of our political and military might, but to the incredible power of God's love and grace. Daily we struggle and we long for a peaceful and just world, a world in which God's mercy and justice is triumphant, but we live in the reality of evil in this world and the power of fear. But we cannot be porters of justice and prisoners of peace if we are not captive to hope. Many feel that we don't have a choice, we feel victimized, what can we do? Why should we care? But we do have a choice and we must care. The people of the United States can recognize that being a superpower does not give us a license to act unilaterally or to allow our shortsight-
can't do it for us. The work is ours. We are the hands, the agents of God. Again, my friend Sam said, "Following Jesus, we must preach by living as if the Gospels were a reality. We must live as if the Kingdom of God is the victory of Christ over the world." And that is as real as the closing Dow Jones Industrial average. It is as real as our morning commute. We must be an icon and a vocation for all those who are searching in this world. We must be compelled to see what we might be and to live it.

Finally my dear mentor and friend, the late Walter Dennis, who was Bishop Suffragan in New York, said "that is what we are to be about if we are the followers of Jesus, we must bring about justice if there is to be peace." And he said in his farewell sermon, "This means that there is no issue, no creature, no institution, no action that is beyond the reach and concern of our ministry. There is no forbidden work, there is no corner of existence, no matter how degraded or neglected, in which you may not venture. There is no person however beleaguered or possessed you may not befriend or represent. There is no cause, no matter how vain or stupid, that you may not witness to peace. There is no risk, however costly or imprudent, that you may not undertake. That is the Gospel," Walter said. "That was the Gospel when I started my ministry and will be when you finish yours. That will be the Gospel when all theologians have completed their scholarly task. That will be the Gospel when all new fads are spent. That will be the Gospel when every social activist has completed their task. That will be the Gospel when every interfaith dialogue has drawn up its final resolution. That will be the Gospel when every rally and political demonstration for justice and peace has succeeded in their goal. That will be the Gospel when every task force has accomplished its goals and every axe has been ground. And that will be the Gospel when everyone is finished marching to many different drums."

My brothers and sisters, it is time that we do and love kindness, that we do and love justice. We must do and love these things, for only then can we walk humbly with our God.
The Intersection of Faith and Practice

by Alexie Torres-Fleming

In prayer and silence, this small Scripture was impressed on my heart: "Whosoever holds on to their life will lose it. Whoever gives their life will save it."

I was born Alexie Torres in the public housing projects in South Bronx, the poorest congressional district in the United States. I am the child of teenage immigrants from Puerto Rico. My daddy was homeless until he got a job as a dishwasher in a deli in the theater district of Manhattan. Daddy was eventually promoted to the head dishwasher to deli man to waiter. He met Mom at a church dance and she knew he was the one. In two years they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

Daddy made a home for us in new public housing projects in the South Bronx and it was a wonderful time for me as a child. I loved home—the music, the sounds, and the culture—and as a child I had no clue about what was going on around me. In the '70s things really began to change. Something terrible happened in my community, which many of you know as the burning of the South Bronx. I remember as a little girl I would sit perched on my radiator and look out the ninth floor window and watch the smoke. My entire neighborhood, block after block after block, went up. I can remember the sound of fire engines that would interrupt conversations as they got louder and came closer, and I remember the acrid taste of smoke in my throat. I understood later that there would be a plan for urban renewal. There were thoughts of a policy called 'planned shrinkage' where they would close down police and fire stations, and public services and ultimately residents would leave and they could just tear things down and rebuild. But the South Bronx is the home of this nation's poorest of the poor, so when they closed down police and fire stations, things just got extremely horrible. People wanted to leave, so store, home, and land owners would burn down their own homes and properties, many times with people inside, so they could collect the insurance money and leave.

This is the legacy that I saw in the late '70s, so it's not a surprise that I began to learn early on that the measure of my success as a poor brown girl would be how far I could get away from the ghetto, from poverty, and from poor people. I became an active, churchgoing young woman in our Catholic church. I began to understand that the world would not see me as a child of God full of goodness and potential, but a child who was “disadvantaged” and “at risk.” I was a list of pathologies and problems that could happen to poor kids. Imagine what that feels like. I know that this is not necessarily done intentionally, but when those labels are assigned to you all the time it becomes a burden, and you internalize those thoughts and feelings. And so many of us still today teach poor young children that they can only succeed when they escape. Of course, that sounds logical. Don't we want our kids to come out of poverty? Don’t we want them to be middle class and get good jobs?

But there is a little bit of a lie underlying that message. I left home after high school and really pursued this dream of taking care of number one, making sure that I had made it. I was supported by my family and church and made sure to become a success story and a shining star. But I found on that journey that I had left behind so much more that made me rich. And yet people like my father were considered not valuable or powerful. Daddy had been promoted to a city job as the maintenance man in our public housing projects, and one of his jobs was to wash the urine off the elevator walls and stairwells.

I was told that I had to leave my old world behind to make it, and I did for a while. I got a good job on Madison Avenue and had a nice apartment on 31st Street. I made a lot of money, traveled, and did all sorts of exciting things. But in the end, my soul was empty. I had everything to live with, but nothing to live for. Someone once said that I was climbing the ladder of success, but it was up against the wrong wall.

I remembered a story from my childhood youth group about the rich young man that came to Jesus and asked, “How can I make it to the kingdom? What do I need to do to become a follower of you?” Jesus told him, “Give up everything you have and follow me.” And the rich young man walked away sad because he had so much. I remembered that story and thought, “Wow, I have become that rich young man.”

Many of us grow up in our culture as fans of the spiritual life and quoting Scripture. I remember my youth group would pray out loud and sing and dance, and we were all big fans of Jesus, big fans of God. But in that moment, I asked myself: “Are you a fan of God, or are you a follower of God?”

We are each called to this sometimes dark place called Earth with a mission and a purpose, and I believe I had sold mine for a bowl of soup.

Alexie Torres-Fleming is the director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, based in the South Bronx. This article is based on her presentation to the Peace Gathering on January 14.
Things began to work in my heart. I believe I had a destiny. I believe we all do. Whoever you are, wherever you are, wherever you sit in life or this world, we are called to this sometimes dark place called Earth with a mission and a purpose, and I believe I had sold mine for a bowl of soup. And I prayed, “God, show me who am I supposed to be. I don’t want to know what other people think I’m supposed to be or where I should be or what I should look like. I want to know who am I called to be. Where is my place? Was I born in the poorest congressional district in the United States by accident of fate?”

Many things happened at that time. I believe deeply in grace and surrender: you give God permission and things begin to evolve and change. I remember coming back home because I thought maybe charity work at church, giving back, and helping out with the food drive and soup kitchen would make me feel better. But it wasn’t enough. So I began to go back to church in my old neighborhood. I grew up in a Franciscan Parish that was deeply rooted in a liberation theology that, as I like to say, doesn’t concern itself with making it to heaven without addressing the hell here on Earth. My beautiful little church was a sanctuary in the middle of hell, but my pastor, Father Mike Tyson, often would say, “Don’t come in here and hide. God’s kingdom isn’t here.”

The church had begun organizing a march against drugs. After the burning of the South Bronx, the crack epidemic hit us very hard in the ’70s and early ’80s. Crack houses had begun to spring up all around the community, and children and families started to get lost in the violence and the addiction. So the church organized a march against crack, and about 300 of us went to seven known crack houses and prayed and sang. I didn’t know what it meant to be an activist or an organizer, only that it felt good and right.

In my office two weeks later, I saw on the news that my church had been torched that night in retaliation from the drug dealers. And I had one of those moments where I had a combination of thoughts. One was “What on Earth did I get myself into? They were all wrong. I shouldn’t have come back.” And another was, “What are you doing sitting here? This is your moment.” So I went back home. The sanctuary was burnt and the windows and statues were broken, including a beautiful statue of the blessed mother, and there were people weeping and crying. Then a little voice came up inside of me and said, “Why are you crying about this building? I don’t live here. Every day, my real church is not who we are.” And so we planned to march again. I used a press list I had. When the news got out, the death threats came. There were threats that the pastor and the church would be shot at, and, if anyone dared to march, the crowd would get shot into. But the pastor got a bulletproof vest and we continued to plan. The young people had the most courage. Mayor Dinkins’ office said, “This is going to be an embarrassment. No one is going to come. This is a waste of resources,” because they had SWAT teams on the rooftops to ensure the crowd wasn’t shot at. But we said, “We are going to do this.”

It was a beautiful autumn day, November 20, 1991, and I had spent the night weeping out of fear that no one was going to come. I walked out to
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Joining the Convergent Conversation

by Angelina Conti

The first morning in the redwoods at Quaker Center in Ben Lomond, California, the facilitators of Redefining the Power of Primitive Quakerism for the 21st Century invited participants to share their words for the Divine. There was considerable diversity in the room: many of the Friends used “God,” a generous smattering said “Jesus” or “Lord,” while others employed words like “Essence” or “Mystery.”

While this diversity may be remarkable in some Quaker settings, it was not so here. Many of the 25 or so participants were affiliated with unprogrammed Pacific Yearly Meeting, but there were also Friends from Philadelphia, Baltimore, South Central, and North Pacific yearly meetings, as well as Freedmen Friends Church in Salem, Oregon, and Evangelical Friends Church Eastern Region (EFC-ER). All had come for a weekend focused on the converging of Quaker traditions, a reconnection with the faith of early Friends, and an overall cross-branch renewal of the Religious Society of Friends.

The facilitators, three well-known Quaker bloggers, have written and led workshops widely on the convergent conversation. They were Robin Mohr of San Francisco Meeting and author of the blog What Canst Thou Say (<http://robinmsf.blogspot.com>), Martin Kelley of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and creator of <www.QuakerQuaker.org>, and blogger at <www.QuakerRanter.com>, and Wes Daniels, a member of EFC-ER and blogger at <http://GatheringInLight.com>.

Though friends and collaborators for several years, this was the first time all three had been in the same place at the same time.

In its most recent incarnation among Friends, the term convergent was introduced by Robin Mohr on her blog in 2005. She suggested it as a word for the increasing number of Friends who were expressing hyphenated, cross-branch identities such as “Conservative-leaning liberal unprogrammed” or “Socially liberal evangelical.” These Friends were often wrestling with the same questions and concerns in their own corners of the Quaker world, using blogs to communicate and cross-polinate.

Convergent was a way of expressing an interest in renewal and innovation that was firmly grounded in, and sprang from, common tradition.

It also offered a linguistic link to both the Conservative tradition of Quakerism, which is Christ- and Bible-centered, as well as the unprogrammed tradition, and to the Emergent Church. The Emergent Church is a modern Christian movement focused on living faith in a postmodern world. Emergent Church communities, which can be denominational as well as nondenominational, tend to emphasize faith as a lived experience, service, or missionary work in the broader society, the importance of narratives and creativity, and a grounding in community life.

Each of the facilitators brought a unique perspective to the convergent conversation, a diversity they emphasized by trading off and blending facilitator roles throughout the weekend. Sessions combined historical information with conversation, worship, and opportunities to share from personal experiences and vision. One session focused on plainness and simplicity as early practices among Friends that are being reclaimed. Another session focused on precedents set by Friends in the 20th century for convergent work, though they did not usually call it that, and particularly on the work of Everett Lewis Cattell, an evangelical Friend from the Orthodox Ohio tradition who was active in the mid-20th century.

Like convergent Friends now, Cattell sought renewal from within the tradition of Quakerism. He also saw the potential for unity among Friends through an understanding of the “church in mission.”

The word mission is certainly fertile ground for a conversation among the branches of Friends. Wes Daniels, whose PhD work at Fuller Theological Seminary in Los Angeles has focused largely on missiology, offered an understanding of missions as not reliant on colonial oppression or even international travel. Rather, he presented missionaries as strangers in a new land or culture who, because they do not draw power from a king or government and cannot coerce, must witness and work with the Gospel to discover a new way of life from a place of solidarity.

If this description still makes Friends uneasy, try substituting “service” or “social justice work” for mission. They are not the same thing, and the presence of the Christian Gospel is central to missionary work; however, the first two descriptors may be more recognizable to unprogrammed Friends who witness to another way of life daily, with their lives, within the domination system that is modern U.S. culture and economy. How do we already offer what the world hungers for—an easy example being our historic witness for peace? What exactly are we talking about when we talk about outreach, anyway? How might we be missionaries in our own land?

Saturday afternoon Martin Kelley offered two questions he sees as central to the convergent conversation, and they are worth repeating:

Why do we do what we do?

Why don't we talk to...?

He reminded us that Jesus asked these same questions, and that they were the foundation of his ministry.

While writing this article, I struggled...
with whether or not to capitalize “convergent,” and whether or not to conceive of convergent Friends as a movement. If nothing else, it is certainly a conversation. That there is a broader current among Friends towards more dialogue across the branches of Friends and a shared hunger for a deeper, more vital spiritual life together is clear. It can be seen in Friends organizations, such as Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and Quakers Uniting in Publications (QUIP), and events like the young adult conferences at Burlington, New Jersey, in 2007 and Earlham School of Religion in 2008 (among others). It can be seen, too, in meetings that are incorporating the worship practices of other traditions into their own, as San Francisco Meeting has done with certain elements of the Conservative tradition. All focus on fellowship, collaboration, and/or cross-pollination across the branches (and in some cases have done so for years), though do not necessarily label themselves “convergent.”

But there are Quaker blogs and bloggers who do. Indeed, by the time this article appears in print, considerable coverage and discussion of the weekend will have happened (and be long since past current) online. The convergent conversation is one that has been powerfully enabled by Quaker blogging and other forms of user-based Internet media. It bursts occasionally into the realm of face-to-face interactions among Friends and more traditional print media. Friends interested in the conversation would do well to watch and participate, and ask their questions there. These websites are good places to start: <www.convergentfriends.org> and <www.quakerquaker.org>.

To that end, I offer some questions that were percolating for me throughout the weekend (and have been posed by other Friends through a variety of media):

What are the implications of naming a phenomenon? What do we gain, and what do we lose? At what point are we simply Friends—from many branches, but still simply Friends—interested in shared renewal and vitality that draws from tradition? At what point does a new movement emerge? And what does a new movement mean?

How do we engage the hunger for renewal and vitality that exists in many of our meetings and churches, and do so in a way that is respectful of the diversity that may already exist there?
Pentecost Sunday in Quaker Meeting

by Alan Kolp

In spite of walking in the cold rain after meeting for worship on Pentecost Sunday, I smiled. I enjoyed meeting for worship. As a visiting U.S. academic on sabbatical in England, I particularly appreciated the opportunity temporarily to become a "regular" in meeting for worship. Having extensive experience in unprogrammed and programmed worship, I value the predictable deep meetings for worship in my adopted Britain Yearly Meeting venue.

Having been born and reared Quaker, I also have found other venues to enrich my spiritual journey. The other major arena for me is the Benedictine monastery. For the moment it took the form of a Benedictine-run Hall—one of Oxford University's family of colleges. It was not unusual for me to stop by St. Benet's for early morning Lauds, praying the Psalms. Then I proceeded to meeting. Such was the case on Pentecost Sunday. Heading the short distance between monastic setting and meetinghouse, I marvelled at how liturgical communities strung round the globe observed Pentecost as the foundation of the Church.

I am thoroughly Quaker, which means that I appreciate the significance of Pentecost: the gift of the Spirit to the disciples and believers. But this significance is not limited to a single Sunday in May. These thoughts constiruted my mental soil, as I joined others gathering in the silence—hoping, no doubt, for that same pentecostal gift of the Spirit. In those early minutes of waiting, it came to me that typically we prepare ourselves for Pentecost by hope—possibly even expectation—that the Spirit will be presented to some or all who gather. At least, I had hope.

The hour passed, hands shaken, and not a word about Pentecost. In fact, there had not been a hint. I had pondered the two primary biblical texts narrating the story of Pentecost. The best-known text (Acts: 2) is what I call the charismatic one. Here the gathered disciples experience the Spirit come with a sound like mighty wind, with tongues like fire. And then, being filled with the Spirit, the global diversity of the group speaks in tongues. The other Gospel text (John: 20) I call the inspiring one. This Pentecost actually happens on Easter Sunday evening with a more restricted audience of gathered disciples. In this scene the resurrected Jesus speaks and, amazingly, his first word is "Peace." He breathes (inspires) on the disciples and admonishes them to receive the Spirit.

My thoughts returned to meeting for worship. Clearly, this Quaker Pentecost Sunday had not been charismatic. No tongues of fire here! There were sounds of wind, but it was normal; its only function was to drive the menacing rain even harder. Upon further thought, however, I concluded that I can only describe by writing AWE in capital letters. A Presence that takes my breath away or makes me cry. That's when all the messages come pouring in, from Jesus, from George Fox, from Parker Palmer, from poetry—or just from nowhere recognizable. The traffic forces me to a halt. Something awful has happened farther down the road.

My Morning Commute

by Sylvia Vriesendorp

I leave my house at 6 a.m. I have a headache and I feel a bit depressed. As on cue, the catbird on the roof greets me, as she does every day, and in quick succession goes through her entire birdsong repertoire. She recently learned how to imitate a crow. She has been watching them for a while, and now she has mastered the sound. My mood shifts a bit. The bird is reminding me not to take myself too seriously and look around.

I commonly start off my commute with silence—no radio, no tape, just the sounds of the car and my own thoughts. Sometimes I leave the radio off for the entire commute. But today I let in the outside world before I get to the highway. I hear about petty fights between nations and my mind wanders off to the potential consequences of such bickering. Other stories fellow. They are all about mistrust, jealousy, and insecurity. I can't stand it any longer and search for music. Chopin's Nocturne No. 18. I reflect on a piece in FRIENDS JOURNAL. I read, by Dorothy Mack ("On Opening and Closing Meeting: Gathering the Web of the Spirit," FJ June 1999), about opening and closing meeting. She gave me some beautiful imagery to think about creating a safe and sacred space. Not just for meeting for worship. Not just for Sundays. But also for learning. Her imagery of weaving a web and how she opens and closes meeting leads me to think about how I open my training sessions or courses. I come in long before the participants arrive and arrange and rearrange the room. It's the weaving of the safe space. a colorful yarn here, a beautiful pattern there. I want people to walk into the room and feel that this is a sacred space where we learn and can explore ourselves for a few weeks or a day.

It is during my morning commute, three times a week, from Boston's North Shore into the city, that I commune with God and weave the Spirit strands in my life's basket. Sometimes I feel God's presence in ways that I can only describe by writing AWE in capital letters. A Presence that takes my breath away or makes me cry. That's when all the messages come pouring in, from Jesus, from George Fox, from Parker Palmer, from poetry—or just from nowhere recognizable. The traffic forces me to a halt. Something awful has happened farther down the road.

Alan Kolp is a member of First Friends Meeting in Richmond, Ind., and attends Cleveland (Ohio) Meeting.
ed it had been Pentecost. We had been breathed upon—whether by the resurrected Jesus or not is a further interesting theological question.

There had been two spoken messages thematically focused on silence. Paradoxically, silence is a kind of “universal tongue.” It has the capacity to unify the global diversity. It provides a crucible for a deep gathering of individual spirits into the unity of the One Spirit. In this kind of unity are found the seeds of peace. In this Pentecostal season may these seeds germinate. May they grow in each of us to become pacifistic ambassadors of the Spirit of the one who said, “Peace.”

The Pentecostal charge is always a missionary one—to be sent. As ambassadors of the Spirit, we will be sent into the world as peacemakers. This is why it is important to have a community—a church—to re-group. And this is why Quakers should celebrate that every Sunday might again be Pentecost.

road, I surmise. I feel blessed and I feel pain for the people who have just become another traffic statistic, an announcement on the traffic report. Beethoven’s Romance no. 2. I hum along. The forced halt leads me to consider the little irritations at work, the judgments I have made about people. Where is the love in the space that separates me from those who are the objects of my irritations and judgments? It takes a real effort and I am losing the AWE. “Yes, but…,” I reason with myself, placing myself up on the pedestal of righteousness or down as the poor victim. Others will have to change, not me.

I am starting another course in a few weeks. People from faraway countries will come to Boston with great anticipation. I have started to weave this container, this basket that will hold us during our time together. It will be strong and beautiful and awesome. I am the bottom of the basket, an important part of the container. And, in my commute, I weave the bottom first.

One-and-a-half hours later, I arrive at work. There were lots of accidents, little and big irritations, bumps on the road. They gave me time to focus on my weaving task. No interruptions, no phone calls; just me, and God.

Sylvia Vrijendrop, an organizational psychologist, is a member of North Shore (Mass.) Meeting.

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Good and Evil: Quaker Perspectives
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I’d venture a small wager that most readers of FRIENDS JOURNAL, including myself, couldn’t give an unequivocal definition of good and evil. Our tradition includes George Fox's vision of the ocean of light and ocean of darkness. But how have we understood that story? What have we in Good and Evil: Quaker Perspectives is a fascinating anthology of 18 essays exploring the question of Friends’ thinking about good and evil since the 1650s.

Most Friends believe we are essentially good, thanks to the Divine spark within each of us—but how do we account for good people doing evil things? Perhaps evil is a substantial force, the evil of Truth, as suggested by Johan Maurer. He notes that Evangelical Friends are generally inclined to see an external struggle between the forces of good and evil as part of the world. Their images include “spiritual warfare” and “the Lamb's War,” in which we struggle to help the forces of good overcome the forces of evil.

Other Friends, taking a less dualistic view, believe that we are essentially good and can enhance that goodness as we nurture our relationship with God. For these Friends, evil is an absence or distortion of good. This thinking can foster an unrealistic optimism view of human nature. As Cory Beals observes, many Friends have difficulty recognizing substantial aspects of evil present in all of us.

Mike Heller writes that John Woolman was less concerned with defining the nature of good and evil and more concerned with the way they are made evident in the things we do. Woolman wrote that evil arises within everyone, yet within everyone is the spirit of divine goodness.

A discussion of good and evil also invites a consideration of our experience of suffering. How do we assign good or evil to events? David Boulton suggests that most events are morally neutral. Other contributors to this book have noted that for many Friends, events and the suffering produced by these events are in the hands of God.

David L. Jones writes that evil is not just out there; it is within each of us as individuals, and within our faith communities as well as our social and political associations. What can we do about the evil within and among us as Friends? Rex Ambler suggests that we have the ability, using the Light within, to recognize our own evil and that, with the support of others, we can change our thoughts and behavior. As Janet Scott notes, what we as Friends can do is offer lives of service as a transforming testimony in the world. Deborah Shaw reminds us that Margaret Fell's words, “But what canst thou say?” suggest that Friends are called to order their lives in such a way that we can respond to the workings of God within us.

Perhaps Robert Barclay, as quoted by Hugh Pyper, sums it up best: “For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way to it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up.”

This reminds me of a Sunday morning more than 30 years ago when I, filled with darkness, walked into meeting for worship. I looked around at Friends assembled and didn't like any of them, nor did I wish them well. Then, as I settled into worship, it came to me that these folks loved me, that some of them even liked me and considered me their friend. A few minutes later I felt my darkness break up as clouds do after a thunderstorm.

—Brad Sheeks

Brad Sheeks, a member of Central Philadelphia (Pa.) Meeting, works as a hospice nurse.

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years. Author James W. Douglass draws from this deep well of research to show us the true John F. Kennedy, the former cold warrior who gradually embraced a tenuous détente with his Soviet enemy, Nikita Khruzhchev.

According to Douglass' reading of this new data, JFK resisted pressure from his military and intelligence advisors to launch a preemptive first strike in the Cuban missile crisis, trusting instead the humanity of his adversaries enough to negotiate a Soviet withdrawal in exchange for a U.S. promise not to invade Cuba. The CIA was furious over this "appeasement of the enemy" and grew more reactive as Kennedy systematically thwarted its cynical plans to plunge the world into nuclear war in the name of democracy.

Although the book goes into the same painstaking detail as many other JFK conspiracy books, it never overwhelms the reader, and it also manages to avoid the bellicose paranoia that often compromises such works. Instead, the author models JFK's own approach, attempting to put himself in the shoes of each character in this drama, seeing the world through their eyes with a minimum of distortion.

Douglass skillfully weaves together: Kennedy's gradual evolution toward détente and pacifism during the Bay of Pigs, Laos, the Cuban missile crisis, the test ban treaty, and Vietnam; Khruzhchev's and Castro's evolving trust in Kennedy's personal integrity, aided by the shuttle diplomacy of papal envoy Norman Cousins; the CIA's anger and frustration over a leader they increasingly viewed as treasonous; and finally its brutal termination of that leader through a well-orchestrated plot intricately laced with "plausible deniability."

Even the wince-worty actions of the CIA become comprehensible when viewed in context of the "Unspeakable." In Metron's words, "it is the void out of which Eichmann drew the pustulous exactitude of his obedience." Enshrouded in our military-industrial complex, the "Unspeakable" feeds off fear and ignorance, sustaining its power through our refusal to acknowledge its existence. Indeed, most of us cannot conceive of such an evil, where the end (democracy, a.k.a. capitalism) justifies any means, even nuclear holocaust.

Using newly available source material, the author paints a clear, almost simplistic, picture of a CIA-directed assassination. The reality is no doubt more complex, and given the fact that there are still many documents that the government has refused to release in the name of national security, Douglass may someday have to probe deeper.

The "Unspeakable," as discussed here, is still with us. As our new President begins to approach the world with openness and diplomacy, we need to blend our hope for his success with a realistic knowledge of the unseen obstacles he is likely to confront.

—Greg McAllister

Greg McAllister, MSW, has a background in philosophy and theology and a lifelong interest in propaganda. He is the author of Confessions of a Serial Celibate and currently lives in Southern Vermont.

Seeing, Hearing, Knowing: Reflections on Experiment with Light


Experiment with Light is a movement within the Religious Society of Friends that aims at putting Quaker lives under guidance of the Light by gathering in small groups to practice a step-by-step process of self-discovery. In this book, Friends from several nations write of the spiritual search and discovery process for readers seeking to enhance their ability to experience the Light within.

An Epistle from the 2004 Experiment With Light gathering at Glenborne, Grassmere, England, sums up the theme: "We invite all Friends who have not yet done so to share this treasure with the same sense of healing and joy that we have found, and may we all grow together in listening more attentively to the promptings of love and truth in our hearts."

Friends of all persuasions are likely to appreciate personal accounts by Rex Ambler, John Daly, Bronwen and John Gray, Anne Hosking, Cynthia Jones, Marcella Martin, Judy Maurer, and Helen Meads. These Experiment With Light Group participants reflect on their experience in ways ranging from poetic to professional, from theological to confessional.

Friends who want to start a "Light Group" in their meetings will find practical assistance from Diana and John Lampen, Shelagh Robinson, and Nancy Saunders. Youth will be interested in Kerstin Backman's account of Light Groups with Swedish young people; while Alternatives to Violence Project folks may resonate with Alex Wildwood's views of the future.

Meditation guidelines include wording likely to appeal to unprogrammed Friends, as well as a biblical language version and one composed of George Fox's historic words for programmed Friends. And the appendix lists a modest array of CDs, books, and Internet resources.

I would supplement the appendix by adding <www.focusingresources.com>, the website of focusing teacher Ann Weiser Cornell. Her first book, The Power of Focusing, taught me to practice this powerful process long before Ambler's "Light to Live By" groups were introduced in my meeting. Cornell's graceful guidelines help me stay in the presence, listen inwardly, and trust the wisdom of the body while waiting in the Light to see, hear, and sense what seems to be known. Her second book, The Radical Acceptance of Everything: Living a Focusing Life, is invaluable for those who wish to integrate focusing into family activities, meeting, and work groups or practices of therapy, spiritual guidance, and bodywork. Ann Weiser Cornell adds depth experience, linguistic clarity, humor, and simplicity to the early focusing procedures developed by Eugene Gendlin and later amplified and introduced among Quakers by Rex Ambler.

—Judith Favor

Judith Favor is a member of Claremont (Calif.) Meeting.

Also of Interest

The Stackhouses of Appalachia: Even to Our Own Times

By Jacqueline Burgin Painter, Graceful Steps, 2006. 421 pages. $39.95/hardcover. An award-winning historian traces the history of the Stackhouse Quakers of North Carolina, which began when Pennsylvania Quaker Amos Stackhouse established a settlement along the French Broad River just after the Civil War.

A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers

By Richard S. Harrison, Four Courts Press, 2008. 260 pages. Euros 50/softcover. This revised and expanded second edition covers Quakers from all provinces of Ireland, mostly 18th- and 19th-century figures. The author, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and a Friend, has written several books on Quaker business.
2009 is the 40th Anniversary of AFSC's Book:
Who Shall Live? Man’s Control Over Birth and Death

Is it time for further discernment?

In 1969, the American Friends Service Committee published this report on which it based its abortion position. Forty long years offers much experience on which to base further reflection - especially since the book was written before Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion in the United States. The difference between prediction of what would happen with legalization and experience of what actually did happen deserves to be explored.

- The book predicted child abuse rates would go down as fewer children were unwanted. Yet the rates have skyrocketed, consistent with the consistent-life view that removing a taboo on violence against unborn children is more likely to create violence against born children.

- The book predicted that legal abortions would be safer for women. Yet scandals have continued to arise, and women have continued to die in startlingly unsafe conditions. Was it the outlawing of abortion, or the nature of abortion itself, that leads to these problems?

- Subsequent experience has shown that large numbers of women who have had abortions regard themselves as traumatized by the experience, and such women are a major constituency group of the right-to-life movement.

- Subsequent experience has shown that there are doctors and nurses who have found performing abortions traumatizing to them. Some have been disillusioned as they observe the actual impact of abortion on women, and say so in front of right-to-life audiences.

- The principles of pro-life feminism have become more developed. These hold that abortion is commonly inflicted on women under unjust, sexist, pressured, and callous conditions.

- The principles of the consistent life ethic have become more developed. These hold that all violence is connected and that we should leave no holes in our arguments against war and the death penalty by allowing for violence against unborn children and their mothers.

- Minority groups such as African Americans, GLBT people, and people with disabilities have found themselves targeted and have formed anti-abortion groups.

In its mission statement, AFSC speaks of itself as “a practical expression of the faith of the Religious Society of Friends.” Yet Friends are not in unity on the topic of abortion. Wouldn’t AFSC therefore benefit from further discernment that includes knowledgeable Friends that are not in unity with their current position?

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Lancaster (Pa.) Meeting has established a Youth Enrichment Fund to encourage youth in the meeting in their spiritual growth as Quakers. Specifically, as approved by Lancaster Meeting last year, the fund is intended to support youth, especially in ages from 8 to 18, “by enabling them to participate in activities that will nurture their spiritual growth and maturation as individuals and that are in harmony with Quaker faith and practice.” Managed by the Youth Enrichment Fund Committee, funds will be available to help underwrite the cost of participation by youth in such events as “Young Friends gatherings, Quaker conferences, service projects, camps, and other growth opportunities.” The enrichment fund, with initial contributions totaling $5,000, is not a part of the monthly meeting’s annual budget. “Members of meeting may make contributions to the enrichment fund as they are so led,” Elizabeth Gates, clerk of Lancaster Meeting, said. “Meeting has scholarship funds to help youth with their college education. We felt the need to help youth under 18 years of age share in wider opportunities for growth in the Quaker experience.” The committee wishes to receive a report from the youth about what was experienced and learned at a particular event. “We received good responses from youth who participated in several events last summer,” Elizabeth Gates said. “There were several moving letters expressing appreciation for the opportunity they experienced. We think the response has been good,” Joe Moore, assistant clerk of Lancaster Meeting, agreed.

- Newsletter from Lancaster Meeting: telephone conversations with Elizabeth Gates and Joe Moore

BULLETIN BOARD

• May 15–17—“Peace within Us, Peace with God, Peace with Our Neighbor” bilingual (English/Spanish) gathering, planned jointly by Friends in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and Evangelical Friends Churches in Philadelphia. For information, visit <www.fwccamericas.org> or contact Jeff Keith at <jeffthelinguist@juno.com> or (215) 551-3747.

• June 8–15—Intermountain Yearly Meeting
• June 11–15—Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association
• June 12–15—Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
• June 18–22—Illinois Yearly Meeting
• June 26–29—Norway Yearly Meeting

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Jesus of Mark 1–3. This Jesus is, of course, a figment from the stained-glass-window Christ we encounter in our churches—just like the Martin Luther King Jr. of today’s mayor’s prayer breakfast sometimes bears scant resemblance to the prophet who was gunned down in Memphis.

Both Jesus and King were deeply impacted by the plight of the poor they encountered in their advocacy work, which caused them to question ever more deeply the relationship between poverty and violence. At the end of their lives, Jesus and King were each hemmed in by all the factions of their respective political terrains: having to navigate death threats from without and dissent from within their own movements, and having as colleagues only a relatively tiny group of feckless companions. But that is how it always is struggling for the New Order of God in a world held hostage by tyrants, terrorists, militarists, and kingpins, unaided by ambivalent religious leaders, insular academics, and utterly distracted young folks. Despite all this, however, both Jesus and King chose nonviolent love without compromising their insistence upon justice. They believed that the movement for God’s Beloved Community was worth giving their lives to—and they invite us, dear Quaker, Brethren, and Mennonite sisters and brothers, to do the same.

So dear colleagues, let us, in the famous words of Ephesians 6, “put on the whole armor of God” as we seek to renew our vocation as Peace Churches. Let us draw on the whole range of nonviolence and restorative justice: not only the kinds of nonviolent direct action focused upon tonight, but also violence reduction work in war zones such as the magnificent experiments of Christian Peacemaker Teams; and all the different forms of conflict transformation and victim offender facilitation and nonviolent communication and personal disciplines of nonviolence. We will need it all. We are contending with Goliath, armed only with the slingshot of David.

On April 19, 1995, a U.S. government office complex in downtown Oklahoma City was bombed, claiming 168 lives and leaving over 800 persons injured. It was one of the deadliest acts of terrorism on U.S. soil. The perpetrator was a young, economically struggling advocate of white supremacy and a military veteran of the first Gulf War. This terrible moment—like so many others in the past such as the Salem witch trials, John Brown’s revolt, Wounded Knee, and My Lai—offered U.S. citizens a mirror into which to look in order to see the violence in the heart of our national story.

Standing today in front of the poignant Memorial Park in Oklahoma City is a statue of Jesus weeping. It alludes to the moment in Luke’s Gospel when Jesus approaches Jerusalem and tearfully laments: “Would that you knew the things that make for peace!” (Luke 19:42). Let us inspire, instruct, and empower all who are trying to discover and experiment with all the things that might make for peace in our weary world.
The great hope is that God is not separate from creation but at work in it and calling us to join in.

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try running smoothly. But that numbness is a betrayal of God’s vision for humanity. And so Brueggemann suggests we see hope “as the refusal to accept reality as the majority states it.” Instead of numbness, hope moves us to explore an alternative: to call into question the status quo, to announce to the world that the present conditions are unacceptable in view of God’s designs for the world. But such hope requires more of us than just speaking up, it requires us to take steps, to move in the direction of God’s Peaceable Kingdom, despite the costs and despite all resistance.

This, of course, was the ministry of Jesus—the incarnation, the fleshing out of God’s hope for the world. We’ve been told the story of the Jewish rebellion in Sepphoris near Jesus’ hometown when Jesus was just a boy. As was explained, this was quickly crushed by Roman forces who burned the city to the ground. I was going to tell that story, too, because it is a powerful reminder of the kind of world Jesus entered into and experienced in his humanity. What wasn’t said was that, in the aftermath, the Romans wanted to send a message to the Jews and teach them a lesson not soon forgotten. So they crucified a Jewish male every 30 feet down a ten-mile stretch of road. For those of you doing the math, that’s over 1,700 Jewish martyrs. Imagine the horror.

Indeed, if young Jesus looked into the eyes of those dead and dying countrymen, it would be an image that could never leave him. For in that ugly moment in human history, Jesus saw just what measure of evil God’s love was up against. It is no wonder that Jesus used the language of the cross as often as he did, even well before he encountered his own literal one. But for him the cross was not about people being unwillingly led to their deaths, but about people voluntarily laying down their lives for God’s sake and for the sake of the world. Such hope! So powerful it even transforms the cruel cross of death into the symbol of hope and life.

Jesus incarnated hope to a hopeless world. But where is hope now? Where it is—right here in front of us, just waiting for our next step! And it is right here, in you and in you and in you and in us—the ongoing incarnation of Christ in the world, His Body. And it is through us that hope is just waiting to be made manifest to a waiting and watching world.

The Apostle Paul called us a colony of heaven. Early Christians sometimes referred to themselves as the people living on the eighth day of the week, which is also the first day of the new creation. Jesus pictured us as cities set on a hill, a Light shining in the darkness. During their civil war, Yugoslavian Christians referred to their fellowships as “islands of hope” in the sea of hopelessness. And that is what we are in our time of war— islands of hope!

My concern is for those of you who are on the front lines as peacemakers and for those of us who are working to create these kinds of alternative communities, how can we sustain hope in the face of such great need and when times are so severe?

I will end with four brief suggestions, because you already know this stuff. There is nothing new here. There may, however, be a need for a reminder to some of us who are forgetful.

The first and greatest is this: abide. What does John’s Gospel say? Abide! Many of us here are activists by nature and nurture. Our problem is not laziness or apathy. Our problem may be a lack of discernment, refusal to accept any vision of hope but our own, or unmet ego needs. What I know is that the kind of Spirit-infused, biblical hope that leads to Shalom is not brought about by frantic striving or desperate means. It gets fleshed out by people who move forward in trust and by those who can and will wait (yes, wait!) upon the Lord. Do you believe that? Then take time to abide.

Second: practice being grateful for your call and your place in God’s mis-
Too often, we throw around names like Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, John Woolman, and Mother Teresa, as if those are the only models to whom we can aspire. It is as if the no-name community organizer, the Podunk-town prophet, the minister with no book titles or speaking schedule to keep is somehow not as faithful and as vital to God's work in the world. I am especially concerned for our young people who are constantly told they “can change the world” if they just believe and work hard enough. The next time I hear that at a high school graduation it will be too soon. Unfortunately, that message can get muddled in the minds of some hearers who come to believe all of the responsibility for a changed world rests on them. And so they become embittered and disillusioned when they find they cannot do it.

No one of us here can change the world on our own and if that is the bar we unintentionally set for each other, it is no wonder there is frustration, anger, and hopelessness among so many peace-and-justice Christians. We can’t—as I was once eldered by a wise old Friend—die on every cross. More pointedly, it seems I wasn’t needed for the messiah job, either. That work had already been done. What we can be, however, is faithful to the work we are given, willing to rejoice in it, intent on doing our very best, and able to delight in the fact that God may use us to change the world. So, be grateful for who you are.

Third, we must cultivate communities that inspire hope. Elton Trueblood called these *incendiary fellowships*, believing that as Jesus came to “cast fire upon the Earth” so now do we. If that is true, we need others around us who will keep us kindled. We are a Body and the kind of life we are called to does not work well in isolation. As I once read, “It’s not psychologically healthy to be the only oddball around.” So, get yourself established in a healthy, healing fellowship that is bent on stepping into God’s hopeful future. Together you can offer a glimpse of the beloved community and bear witness to Jesus’ Peaceable Kingdom. More than any of our programs, this may inspire more hope and change than we might imagine.
Finally—and I say this with hesitation, but it has already been hinted at by others this week—moving toward hope has to start here, and it has to start here together. We have already heard several people reference the divisions within Christ’s people, even among the three Historic Peace Churches. We sort of laugh nervously and knowingly at this, and then move on as if that is just the way it is.

This is a source of deep sadness to me. I think one of the saddest aspects of this, however, is how it undermines our message and witness to other Christians who do not yet share our peacemaking concern. For instance, I am connected to the evangelical expression of the Body of Christ. What I find among many in that group is a real openness to the message of active peacemaking and nonviolence. But a barrier to some of them is not the theology behind it or even some of the practical implications of peace work as much as it is the lack of integrity and credibility they perceive with our message. If it is our hope that other brothers and sisters will take seriously this call to peacemaking, then the divisions among us can no longer be a laughing matter.

I would argue that one of the most hopeful things Jesus had the audacity to say was this: By this the world will know that you are my followers if you—what? Love one another! If Jesus could take a tax-collector and a zealot, bringing bitter enemies together and making them brothers; and if Paul could take a Gentile and a Jew, with their history of deep hatred and have them come together in a peace-filled fellowship where unity transcended their diversity—then what can, what must we do? What kind of hopeful first step might we take this week as we gather?

May hope inspire us to move forward together into a vision of God’s New Day! And may we have the courage and faith to take those steps together!
"Whose Image is on the Coin?"
continued from page 19

turning to his troublemaking colleagues, putting a hand on their shoulders—"Whose image is on this coin, these coins?"

And then—but not till then—Jesus said, "So give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's."

For 2,000 years, because we did not let ourselves learn each other's wisdom, it has been harder for us to learn deeply what the rabbis were saying when they honored the sacred uniqueness of each human being made in God's Image—sacred not despite our differences but precisely because of them—multi-gendered and multi-colored, multi-tongued and multi-faithed. And it has been harder for us to learn deeply what Jesus was saying about the sacred resistance of holding fast to our uniqueness when we are confronted with the mechanical uniformity imposed by Caesar.

The Infinite One cannot be reflected in the world except through diversity. This is true not only of each human individual but of our different traditions. What the rabbis transmitted about God's Image was subtly different from, though complementary with, what Jesus transmitted about God's Image.

And what about the third great Abrahamic tradition in our midst—the one our government has so cavalierly used our own blood and treasure to attack, the one so many in both the Jewish and Christian communities have been so delighted to disdain?

The Quran does not use this image of the Image. But what the Quran does say is a kind of profound collective turning of that story, because it too celebrates the diversity that flows from God's Infinity. God, speaking through the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, says to all the world: "I have made humanity through many diverse tribes and peoples throughout the world, not so that they can despise and hate one another, but so they can get to know, to learn, and to love each other."

The greatest organ of our hearing, my beloved Rabbi Phyllis Berman teaches, is not the ear; it is the heart. The time has come at last for us all to hear these teachings from all our troubled families, time at last to open not only our ears but the ears of our hearts to each other.
MILESTONES

Deaths

Boardman—Elizabeth Reynolds Jelinek Boardman, 91, on September 28, 2008, in Bellefonte, Pa. Betty was born on August 8, 1917, on a cherry farm near Sturgeon Bay, Wis., to Elizabeth Ellis Reynolds and Benjamin Jelinek. She grew up in Milwaukee and attended University of Wisconsin in Madison, where she earned a BS in Landscape Architecture in 1940. Soon after that, she married Eugene Powers Boardman and went with him to Hawaii, where he was studying vernacular Japanese in the Marine Corps, and where they witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor. Betty became a Quaker in 1948, and she and Gene brought up their family in Madison, Wis. She also lived for a year in Washington, D.C., and a year in Tokyo, Japan. Betty lived next door to her daughter Erika to Groton, Mass., for ten years and moved to Bellefonte in 2001, living for two years with her daughter Susan before moving to Centre Crest Nursing Home for the last five years of her life. Betty practiced landscape architecture, but spent most of her out-of-home energy working for peace in the world. She traveled to North Vietnam in 1967 with other Quakers to take medical supplies. Her book The Phoenix Trip: Notes on a Quaker Mission to Haiphong tells about her experiences on this mission. She was a member of the Madison Meeting for many years and attended State College (Pa.) Meeting after she moved to Bellefonte. An avid seamstress, knitter, reader, and gardener, she had a well-developed comic sense that made her, her family, and her friends roar with laughter. She was an accomplished cook, introducing foods from around the world to her family before the foods became fashionable. She played cello, sang in several choirs, and loved good conversation. She enjoyed her family most of all, delighting in her children. Betty was preceded in death by her husband, Eugene Boardman, in 1987; and two brothers, Benjamin Jelinek and Richard Frank Jelinek. She is survived by three daughters, Susan Boardman, Sarah Furnas (Andrew Heckert), Erika Kraft (Douglas); three sons, Krist Boardman (Dianne), Andrew Boardman, and Benjamin Boardman (Terry); nine grandchildren, Jennifer Poulter, Barnaby Furnas, Caleb Furnas, Kimberley Boardman, Alexander Boardman, Nathan Kraft, Damon Kraft, Catherine Boardman, and Owen Boardman; six great-grandchildren; one brother, David C. Jelinek (Dorothy); two sisters-in-law, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Cronk—Elwood Francis Cronk, 89, on Dec. 31, 2008, in Medford, N.J. Elwood was born in Osining, N.Y., to Nathaniel and Frances Cronk. He graduated from Pleasantville High School in 1939 and studied accounting at Packard Business College. In December 1940 he participated in a Friends workcamp in Cooperstown, N.Y., playing on the town’s baseball team while he was there, and in 1942, after registering as a conscientious objector, he was assigned to work at the Petersham, Mass., Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp. After working in this assignment for several years, he left without permission, started work in a hospital, was picked up, and

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served a year in prison. During the years following his release he was active in the peace movement, and in 1955 he began working with high-school-age Quakers for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. That summer he met Joy Newby, of Des Moines, Iowa, and the following year they were married at Des Moines Friends Church. Their son, Alan, was born two years later. In 1967 Elwood began work as a community activist, becoming executive director of the Lower Bucks County Community Centers (LBCC), Inc., in Fallsington, Pa., which sponsored a local Emergency Relief Program. He also helped to develop a bilingual preschool program as part of his work with the Puerto Rican community in Bristol borough, administered the Bucks County Bail Bond program, and helped the Bucks County Mobile Home Owners organize to combat the injustices they faced. He helped form the Bucks County Consumers Organization, writing about consumer issues in a twice-weekly "Bucks Beef" column in the Bucks County Courier Times. Beginning in 1975 he helped to organize Safer Neighborhoods Are Possible (SNAP) groups to stamp out crime and vandalism in Lower Bucks County. In 1995 he and his wife, Joy, moved to Medford Leas in Medford, N.J. The courts in Burlington County Court appointed him as a child-custody mediator, and he facilitated the Alternatives to Violence Project in Fort Dix Federal Prison and the New Jersey State Prison for more than four years. Elwood was preceded in death by his sister, Louise Cronk. He is survived by his wife, Joy Cronk; his son, Alan Richard Cronk (Joti Sekhon); and his grandson, Imran Sekhon Cronk.

Moore—Ina Regan Moore, 89, on December 29, 2008, in Ocean Grove, N.J. Ina was born on December 28, 1919, in Spiceland, Ind., to Sebina and Chester L. Regan. She graduated from Mooresown Friends School in 1937 and Earlham College in 1941, after which she worked in a shelter for girls. Ina and Harold Moore married in 1943, and they attended the United Methodist Church in Westfield and Rahway-Plainfield (N.J.) Meeting. When her children were grown, Ina went to Kean College (now Kean University) for additional studies and worked with handicapped adolescents at John E. Runnels Shelter Hospital near Watchung. Ina was preceded in death by her husband, Harold A. Moore, in 2004; her son, Theodore Moore, in 1993; and her son, Daniel Moore, in 1994. She is survived by two sons, Douglas and Edward Moore; her sister-in-law, Mildred Brandenburger; her nephew, Gary Brandenburger; three daughters-in-law; five grandchildren; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren.

Overman—Joan Desper Overman, 77, on January 22, 2009, in Corning, N.Y., after a long illness. Joan was born on October 9, 1931, in New York City and attended Earlham College in Indiana, where she met her husband, Kenneth Overman. Joan and Kenneth moved to Corning, N.Y., in 1960. With three children at home and a full-time teaching job, Joan commuted to SUNY Geneseo and Mansfield University to earn her Master's in Library Science in 1972. Joan was a loving wife, mother, friend, librarian,
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and tireless promoter of peace and global understanding. She retired in 1992, devoting her time to organizations such as the Peaceful Gatherings Coffeehouse and the Peace with Justice Committee of the Corning Vicinity Council of Churches. She helped start the Corning Sister Cities Association and served as co-chairwoman of the Experiment in International Living, hosting visitors and foreign students from Japan, Ukraine, and other countries. She was active with many other organizations including AAUW, Habitat for Humanity, and PFLAG. In addition to reviewing books and serving as book review assistant for FRIENDS JOURNAL, Joan and her husband produced newsletters for five local groups. Joan shared her love of books as librarian at Corning Community College, Corning Free Academy Middle School, and many local elementary schools. She and her husband were active in both the United Methodist Church of Corning and Elmira Friends Meeting. She is survived by her husband of 55 years, Kenneth Overman; one daughter, Nancy Overman (Elliot Eder); two sons, Alan Overman (Nancy) and Jeff Overman (Mark Singel); four grandchildren, Lucas Overman, Kelsey Overman, Jacob Eder, and Claire Eder; one sister, Nancy Hall (David); a nephew, Jonathan Hall (Kathy); a niece, Alison Hall; and many loving friends.

**Payne—Ann Hardy Fassett Payne,** 83, on August 1, 2008, in Tucson, Ariz. Ann was born on September 24, 1924, in Middleborough, Mass., to Grace and Irving Hardy. As a child growing up in Manhasset, Long Island, N.Y., she developed poliomyelitis and wore leg braces for a long time. In 1935 she became a member of Manhasset Preparative Meeting, and later joined Westbury (N.Y.) Meeting. Ann accented the nursing program at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, graduating with honors. After serving as a cadet nurse in World War II, she became an adjudicator for Blue Cross and Blue Shield. In 1946, she joined Cambridge (Mass.) Meeting, where she and Deane Fraser Fassett were married in 1949. After attending Sandy Spring (Md.) Meeting from 1955 to 1963, Ann transferred her membership to Gunpowder Meeting in Maryland. Ann and Deane divorced in 1974, and she came to Tucson, Ariz., to join her parents, taking care of them until their deaths. In 1978 she joined Pima Meeting in Tucson. Ann's family added greatly to the life of Pima Meeting, contributing especially by their care of members and by helping to organize social events and potlucks. Her family generously reached out to those in need, projecting an expectation that both helped and strengthened individuals. Friends also remember her skill in cross-stitch embroidery, for which she had won many awards. In 1984 Ann married a longtime friend, S. Howard Payne, and moved with him to Green Valley, Ariz. Although the 70-mile round-trip made it difficult for her to attend meeting regularly, she stayed in touch with Friends. In later life Ann suffered Post-Polio Syndrome complications, resulting in several hospital and rehabilitation confinements. When she and Howard moved to an assisted-living community in Tucson, she joined several committees and participated in the life of the meet-
ing as much as her health permitted. Ann is survived by her husband, S. Howard Payne; four daughters, Cynthia Ann “Nolly” Gesinger, Jeanne F. Medlin, Karen F. Kinkhaus, and Elizabeth G. Faustett; two grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

**Warrington—Donald C. Warrington, 89, on September 13, 2008, in Blanco, Tex. Don was born on August 30, 1919, in Philadelphia, Pa., to Sarah Isabel and John Burwell Warrington. He graduated from Abington High School in Abington, Pa. Don’s education at Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University) was interrupted by World II, when, as a lifelong Quaker, Don registered as a conscientious objector. While working at a sawmill for the Civilian Public Service (CPS), he lost four fingers on one hand and was discharged with IV-F status. After he graduated from Drexel in 1946, he did relief work and accounting for AFSC in China, where he met and married Dorothy Candlin. What became his life’s work began in 1950, when he accepted his first position with the YMCA in Reading, Pa. In 1962, he joined the staff of the YMCA International Committee and became the first fraternal secretary in Bogota, Colombia, the last country in South America to build a YMCA. Don and his family lived in Bogota for five-and-a-half years. When they returned to the United States, Don held several posts with the YMCA in Connecticut and Pennsylvania, retiring in 1981 as financial officer of the Philadelphia YMCA. Don’s last years were spent in Blanco, Tex., where he built a solar house for his family, where he and Dorothy were members of Hill Country Meeting in Kerrville, Tex. He served on an AARP committee that conceived and secured funding for the Gem of the Hills Community Center in Blanco, which he enjoyed building with its all-volunteer crew. Don is survived by his wife of 61 years, Dorothy Candlin Warrington; his son, Tom Warrington (Donna); two daughters, Patricia Rocha (Jose) and Nancy Warrington; two grandchildren; a sister, Polly Sutch; and other family.

**Willoughby—Lillian Willoughby, 93, on January 15, 2009, in Deptford, N.J. Lillian was born on January 29, 1915, in West Branch, Iowa, to Sara Hinshaw and Verlin Luther Pemberton. A lifelong Friend, she grew up on a farm and as a young girl drove tractors and other farm vehicles with her father. She attended Scattlegood School (now Scattergood Friends School), Westtown School, and Kansas State Teachers College, graduating from University of Iowa in 1938 with a degree in Home Economics. She met George Willoughby at the university, and they married in 1940 under the care of West Branch Meeting (Conservative). Lillian helped create the Scattergood Resettlement hostel at the (then closed) Scattlegood School, which in 1939-1941 provided temporary housing and job placement for Eastern European refugees escaping from Nazism. Lillian, in charge of the food service, often served daily meals for 100 people. When her family moved to Deptford, N.J., in 1954, they joined Haddonfield Meeting, and Lillian worked to desegregate the
new Levittown housing development, create the first public library in Deptford, and desegregate a local friends school. She also helped form the South Jersey Peace Center. In 1957, Lillian was the first woman to protest nuclear testing in Nevada by attempting to enter a nuclear test site, and she and several others kept a vigil at the Atomic Energy Commission office in Maryland until the head of the AEC agreed to meet with them. A year later, Lillian served on a committee that organized an 18-month vigil to protest germ warfare production at Fort Detrick, near Frederick, MD. At times when George was involved in peace movement activities, Lillian was the breadwinner of her family, working as a dietician in hospitals and nursing homes in the Philadelphia, PA, area. In 1969, Lillian and George moved to Pendle Hill, where George had taken a teaching position. Lillian felt called to refuse to pay war taxes, and the IRS seized her car in the spring of 1970. That same year, Lillian and George moved to West Philadelphia, joined Central Philadelphia Meeting, and formed the Life Center Association, a community that was part of a national network called Movement for a New Society. At its strongest point, about 20 houses were part of the community, including a food cooperative, a publishing house (New Society Publishers), and numerous action groups addressing social issues. Lillian often led training in nonviolent action. In 1970 she joined the Friendly Presence, peacekeepers or marshals organized to keep order in demonstrations such as the vigil at the MOVE standoff in the Powelton Village section of Philadelphia in 1978. In 1974, Lillian began traveling with George to India, where they led nonviolence workshops. Around 1985, the Willoughbys returned to Deptford, and in 1992, Lillian used money left to her to buy 32 additional acres of land that, along with their farm, would become Old Pine Farm Natural Lands Trust in 1994, giving shape to her love for the Earth. In 1995, Haverford College awarded Lillian an honorary degree. To protest the Iraq War in 2003, Lillian and others blocked the entrance to the Federal Building in Philadelphia, and she spent a week in jail rather than pay the fine. Lillian’s life was committed to Quaker testimonies, especially peace and simplicity, expressed through nonviolent action, civil disobedience, and refusal to pay war taxes. Just before Christmas in 2008, she experienced a stroke that left her right side paralyzed. Years earlier, she had determined to remain at home without eating should something like this happen. Lillian is survived by her husband, George Willoughby; three daughters, Sharon, Sally, and Anita Willoughby (Jeff Naidich); one son, Alan Willoughby (Linda Shusterman); and granddaughters, Ariella Willoughby-Naidich, Marissa Willoughby-Naidich, and Lianna Willoughby, one brother, Ernest Pemberton; and a sister, Alice Smith.
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