

# Sentinel News

*QUERY: Do our lives reflect Quaker testimonies? Are we open and responsive to continuing revelation and do we incorporate it in our spiritual life? Is our Quaker witness characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others? Do we recognize that the Spirit works in the world through us? Does our witness lead us to the condition in which we “walk cheerfully over the earth answering that of God in everyone”? Do we as a Meeting try to share in the religious life of our wider community, availing ourselves of opportunities for worship and service with other local religious groups?*



## Who We Are

Our decision process of WHO WE ARE as both Friends and individuals can be formidable and confusing. Friends do not follow a doctrine of rules and rituals. Each of us must decide how to profess our faith using our values, words and actions. Our charge can be formidable and confusing in its simplest form. Differences between our beliefs, actions and Friends ways provide opportunities for much soul searching and adjustment in our lives. How do you come to a personal consensus considering your beliefs and outward indications?

People unfamiliar with Friends ways sometimes ask “Do you believe in the Bible?” Offering a positive answer to our beliefs is sometimes challenging. Some Quakers answer in the negative by stating what Friends do not have. For example, one may respond, “We do not have ministers, sins, or saints”. Others positively echo that “Everyone has the light of God within them”, which can be vague and confusing. A lengthily discourse on George Fox would quickly dim any emerging light, and may propel the inquirer in another direction. None of these responses are good ways to spread the Friendly Light.

## How Do We Know?

If we cannot easily explain what we believe in, how can we be sure what it is? The discovery process is not easy since there are no landmark ceremonies or special age milestones. There is not even a prayer that guarantees “I believe in God.....” for all to hear. Many people argue that the “Ten Commandments are iron clad rules of faith and life. Others claim that they are “Ten Suggestions” to strive for. Many people may argue for valid deviations from one or more commandments. The age old argument of absolute truth vs. relative truth needs to be balanced in working toward our personal consensus. Is it person justifiable to steal money for drugs administered for their child’s life threatening illness? Is it

acceptable for a person to steal money for drugs to relieve a painful addiction withdrawal? Is not stealing an absolute truth never to be broken or can it be justified under certain circumstances? Reaching clarity is readiness for your belief system is reaching an internal consensus of your conscience. It is an unwritten plan of growth and development that fluctuates often. We decide what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, based on our belief in a spiritual life, and if there are really pure edicts never to be violated. We ask ourselves if there are pure edicts never to be violated.

## Turn On the Light

Many religions have sacraments, communion, use signs of the cross, or wear hats and vestments as symbols of holiness or faith. Although Quakers have no such symbols, there is a visiting Friend who wears an ancient Quaker hat to Meeting. Some elder Friends still slip into plain language using “thee and thy” when stressing a point, others worship silently not having spoken for fifty years. Another charismatic Quaker uses a hand puppet to deliver messages. When asked why they take such actions, they respond by stating it professes their faith and perhaps can be called an individual ministry. Institutional signs and symbols that show our Light within are lacking but individual demonstrations prevail. How do Friends demonstrate their virtue and commitment to faith to the world?

## The Journey

Early Friends clearly preached the teachings of Jesus in a didactic manner. Now Friends deductively question leadings, statements and writings to arrive at their beliefs. It is an unnerving process to have arrived at clearness, then only to have doubts surface in new “Light”. In today’s world, new “Quaker speak” adds to our fuzzy vision. Words such as “feel, maybe, perhaps, probably and leadings” encourage openness and thought, but complicates the clearness process.

As we consider our positions on truth, honesty, generosity, mercy and other moral dilemmas, we should consider the wise words that “all virtue is a balance between excesses”. In an example of spending money, your intermediate position on being stingy or too wasteful needs examination. How do you decide how much spending money is enough? Telling the whole truth may also be a balancing act if one thinks about the consequences of its outcome. Consider the example of a burglar entering your home and demanding to know the location of hidden family jewels and money. There are times when telling the whole truth can actually hurt someone, physically, emotionally or financially. This may be reason enough to omit or slant facts. If the sole purpose of the questioner is to do harm, is telling the truth virtuous or necessary?

Our ways of worship encourages everyone to think openly and honestly from their hearts. No one directs your thoughts or worship. Each person is fully respected but the process can be delicate and fragile. Emerging faith and confidence can be easily violated should worship be interrupted, challenged

or criticized. Sometimes a polite question or a simple “Thank you for your message” after worship is all that is needed to promote confidence in finding your way. But most often a blessing of silence and acceptance that someone has spoken God’s word suffices.

The journey becomes more difficult when we file other’s leadings into our inner data base. For every statement of belief, there may be as many questions or contradictions in our hearts. New seekers attending Quaker Meetings can be confused and may not understand that all views of the Light within, are heard by everyone without judgment. Many new attenders and members now come from diverse religious backgrounds and bring different interpretations to Friends’ ways. Now there are groups which claim to be non theist Friends, atheist Friends, Christ Centered Friends, United Friends and more. It can help to establish a base line search for a more universal belief in God’s Light. Does our culture of open acceptance foster confusion?

## Differences From Venus and Mars

It is widely recognized that men and women communicate differently, interpret the same phenomena differently and have somewhat varying perspectives. One modern day philosopher suggests that women are more care centered in their life outlooks and men are more rules oriented. Such contrasts can establish a “rights vs. responsibility” dichotomy. If that theory is true, then either position can complement the other as a foil or aggravate the opposite view immensely. Women find value in networks and relationships, men focus on hierarchical chains of command. While men may see strength as assertion and aggression, women see nurturing and interdependence as power. Spirited debate may follow such an argument. To truly be open and accepting, each moral dilemma can borrow from the other to form a more complete spirit. Do men and women differ in their ethical and moral development?

## Will We Find It?

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Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is currently undertaking the daunting job of establishing statement of belief for Friends. The purpose is for our Friendly values to be recognized more easily. Simplicity is a keystone testimony, but we have journeyed far from its intent. Early Friends felt that their mission was to simplify the spirit of Christianity and look beyond the elaborate vestments of church, priests and accoutrements. Buildings had sparse furniture, no decorations and people wore plain dress as a rebellion against excesses that were obscuring the true light of God. Perhaps we should make our moral baseline more certain to all seekers. These valuable statements can facilitate an in depth process that insures "All are Welcome" in body and spirit. Are we intellectually obscuring the light of God?

## The Golden Rule

The question remains on how we arrive at our moral and ethical value system, without anyone telling us what to do. If the Friendly process were simple, would it be easier of a challenge? Virtually all religions espouse the golden rule, "**do unto others as you would have others do unto you**". Testing your hypothesis requires that you walk that mile in someone else's shoes. We cannot go wrong with that approach.

### First Day School News

A note from Betsy Cotton, the FDS coordinator:

Dear All,

I hope that everyone had a wonderful summer. We're looking forward to an exciting year at First Day School. We're going to be talking about "What do I stand for?" throughout the year, which will provide an opportunity to explore our values and how we make our lives speak. As in the past, we'll be working on the same material at age-appropriate levels each week.

Classes: Given the age distributions of the children this year, there are going to be only TWO main classes. The younger one will be for 1st to 5th graders, and Carolyn Hill-Fotouhi will be the lead teacher, and the older one

will be for 6th through 11 grades, lead by Chris Kerr. Note, however, that we plan to regularly split the younger class into two, with the 1st and 2nd graders in one group and the 3rd to 5th graders in the other. Lauri Bushar will be leading one of those groups. In addition, Melody Tinsman and Becky Kunkel have agreed to lead several art projects for both groups, though not necessarily at the same time. (I believe I know who the dedicated co-teachers in each class are, but as I haven't had confirmation of that, I don't want to commit them in writing to that!)

So if you're reading this and feeling like everyone else is involved and you're wondering how YOU can be involved, here's a start...

Dates: On **Sept. 12**, the first day of FDS, we will meet for about 20-30

minutes after Meeting for Worship (while the kids play) to briefly gather thoughts about what you, as parents, want for your children at FDS. When we did this last, the major priorities of the parents who children attended FDS was 1) providing a faith community of other young people/seekers, and 2) Bible literacy. We would like to hear from all of you (and ensure that everyone has a means of being heard!) as to whether those priorities remain the same and if your priorities are being met.

On **Sept. 19**, there will be a potluck after Meeting for Worship, which will coincide with/usurp the usual social hour.

House-keeping: We are going to try REALLY hard to start FDS promptly at 10:00 this year, so please try to ensure that your children are at Meeting by then.

If you could let both me and your child's teacher know when you are not going to be there, it will help enormously in planning. We know that things come up, but when there is notice, it helps us know if we need to plan a class for 3 or 13, which has implications for activities, crafts, etc.

As always, if there are any concerns, issues, ideas, leadings,

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whatever -- please don't hesitate to contact me.

See you Sunday!

Peace, Betsy

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**The Adult First Day School on September 26** will be a Discussion of Quaker Parenting.

Join us for a Discussion of Quaker Parenting at the Adult First Day School. Held immediately after Meeting on September 26. We will explore the spiritual context of parenting. How to instill Quaker values in our children? How to foster simplicity in a materialistic and complex world? Where is the intersection of discipline and peace and non-violence? Do we make kids go to Meeting?

Why doesn't "I wish thee wouldn't do that?" work for modern kids? Or does it?

Join us for a lively and thought provoking discussion of Quaker parenting!

## **An Exciting Year for the Outreach Committee!**

First, I want to thank John Mathieu for all his years of great service running the Outreach Committee. We'll be leaning on him for his sagely advice and assistance throughout the year. Outreach is looking for volunteers to help serve on the Committee this year. I will be reaching out to previous members to see if they want to continue in their participation. We will be holding monthly meetings immediately following the first (will try to limit to 30 min), first day of the month. This will coincide with the Worship & Ministry Committee meeting and will allow the two Committees to occasionally hold joint meetings and collaborate on several programs this year.

This year we're going to try to have a Children's Program in the Fall and are reaching out to the First Day School for exciting ideas. We'll also take over the coordination of the Coffee House event and the Quaker Community Day in the Spring. Jane Kornhaber has set up the first draft of the Solebury Friend's website as part of the Bucks Quarterly Meeting site and we'll keep you informed of its progress. We're looking for ideas on how to optimize its use and are in the middle of trying to post the Sentinel on the site as well as strengthen some of the information on our programs. Photos of recent events are also welcomed. Please contact Jane Kornhaber at [jkornhab@gmail.com](mailto:jkornhab@gmail.com).

We'll also try to more actively promote our Social Hour to attract other members of the community, including using the sign which was completed last year. With Worship & Ministry we'll also revisit the opportunities for outreach that may be presented through Quaker Quest. Even without a formal program there may be portions of the program we can adopt. Whether you're formally a member of the Outreach Committee, we consider all members and attendees to be ambassadors of Outreach. We need your help with various programs but just as importantly to engage your friends, fellow workers and members of the community whenever appropriate in dialogue that provides an opportunity to discuss general Quaker values. It is against much of our nature and heritage to proselytize but there's nothing wrong with a little old fashion 'passive promotion'.

Looking forward to a great year!

Mike Daley

Outreach Committee, Clerk

**SFM Friendly News**

**During the month of June** Friends from SFM visited Chandler Hall to conduct brief Meetings for Worship with the resident Friends. The Friends are always warm, receptive and appreciative. The residents often ask for updates of the Meeting and how the various members are doing. While sometimes their memories of the present may be faltering their fond memories of the past and their Friends at their respective Meetings are unflinching. The First Day School had a field trip on one of the First Days and the children always light up the room for the residents. Later in the month, Marybeth Snyder, Marjorie Crooks and Mike Daley visited. We discussed loss and things we missed. Friends, family members, sewing and our youth were all mentioned. Much of the hour was spent in joyous song with heartfelt voices bellowing out old time hymns. The inner light of all these Friends shines bright and we were all blessed with a wonderful meeting.



**Judith and Philip Toy** have just returned from a month's pilgrimage in Ireland and Scotland as representatives of Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness practices. They were especially impressed with the mature communities of: Camphill Ballytobin, a Steiner community which Judith said was a work of heart, two hours outside of Dublin, where they led a retreat for people from around the country; Dzochen Beara, Sogyal Rinpoche's Buddhist center set on an Atlantic cliff on the Dingle Peninsula in the West of Ireland; Kagyu Samye Ling, a bit of Tibet in South Central Scotland; and the eco-community of Findhorn in the North of Scotland on the Moray Firth, where they led two retreats. Findhorn's 400 residents enjoy the distinction of having the smallest carbon footprint of any community in the industrialized world. The Toys found Findhorn to be a deeply spiritual and sacred community of celebration and joy.

*Findhorn Barrelhouses*

SOLEBURY FRIENDS MEETING

NINTH MONTH, FIRST, 2010

**Friendly News, Cont'd.**

The first social hour will be September 19 and is a covered dish lunch following Meeting for Worship. All are encouraged to bring food to share.

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Mary Fuges passed away on July 2, 2010 at the age of 94. Mary had been a member of Solebury Friends Meeting since 1989 when she transferred her membership from Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting. There will be a memorial service for Mary on Tuesday, September 14, at 4:00 at the Solebury Friends Meetinghouse.

Finger food contributions are welcome.

For more details, please contact Marion Hepburn or any member of the Oversight and Counsel Committee.

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Preventing Genocide in the 21st Century—  
The Role of the United Nations

Ariela Blätter, Director of Policy & Programs, Citizens for Global Responsibility.

Thursday, September 16, at 7:00 p.m.  
Penn Hall, Pennswood Village  
1382 Newtown-Langhorne Road, Newtown  
(Route 413, 0.6 mile south of Newtown Bypass)

"Preventing Genocide in the 21st Century—the Role of the United Nations" is the provocative title of the next program of

Bucks County Chapter of the United Nations Association. What can the UN do to prevent another genocidal slaughter like what we have had in Cambodia, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Our speaker will be Ariela Blätter, Director of Policy and Programs at Citizens for Global Solutions. Ms. Blätter has extensive experience as an advocate and lobbyist for international human rights and criminal justice. Before coming to Citizens for Global Solutions, she worked with Amnesty International. She is also a permanent representative to the UN on establishment of the International Criminal Court. Citizens for Global Solutions works to educate Americans about global interdependence and related issues, and to strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.

Admission is free and all are welcome.

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Valerie Brown kindly shared some photographs of her summer adventures:



*GATHERING AT SMM OF THE NEW HOPE  
LAMBERTVILLE SPIRITUAL BOOK GROUP*



*JOHN STRACHAN IN KEY WEST, FL,  
START OF ROUTE 1*



*PUTNEY, VT MEETINGHOUSE*

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The Annual Peace Fair, September 25

Buckingham Friends has generously hosted the Peace Fair since its recent revival. A while ago, it was on the grounds of the George School. This may be the last year that the volunteers at Buckingham can manage to juggle all the priorities and continue to host the event. This may be our opportunity to consider how and where the Peace Fair can take place in 2011.

William Penn on Trial

October 17 has been set for a trial in Doylestown to consider charges against a certain William Penn, associated with numerous publications concerning religious practice. The buzz on the street suggests the trial will say much about the behavior of judges, juries, and what 'trial by jury' is. The action begins at Doylestown Meeting at 2:00 PM.

Crop Walk for 2010

Take a hike and enjoy the Fall Colors. The annual Crop Walk, sponsored by Church World Service to respond to world hunger, will start in Lambertville on October 24 at 1:00. Get your pledge envelopes at the Meeting in early October, and persuade your friends to support your continued plans for exercise and fellowship. Web site pledging and Facebook promotions have become popular ways to build pledge support.



From the green mountains of Vermont to the warm ocean waters of the Outer Banks of North Carolina, summer was fun, but we are all ready for the fall!

Happy Fall, Friends!

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Solebury Friends Meeting  
The Religious Society of Friends  
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New Hope, PA 18938

ALL ARE WELCOME