

NYM Journal

Friends EnLightening Friends

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A Publication of Northern Yearly Meeting

Summer/Fall 2019

Letter From The Editor

Tom Darrow

Kenosha-Racine Friends Worship Group

Now that the first issue of *NYM Journal* has paved a path for us, we move forward with another issue that reflects the faith-stories of our Friends in the Northern Yearly Meeting and beyond. Using various methods of written language: Epistles, Traveling Minutes, poetry and provocative prose, we explore the challenges of life. The contributions in this issue range from varied writings resulting from the Annual Session in May to challenging insights about the social milieu in which we live. All of this becomes the construct of who we are as Quakers in the early 21st century.

A new feature in this issue is *Letters to the Editor*. While these letters represent a positive response to our inaugural issue, it is my hope that this section will become a forum of healthy dialogue on matters that concern us all. Correspondence will always be welcome.

Upcoming Dates:

- Fall Interim Session – November 1-2, 2019, Minneapolis Friends Meetinghouse, Minneapolis MN
- NYM Annual Session – May 22-25, 2020, Lions Camp, Rosholt WI

Letters To The Editor

Ravenna Helson

Milwaukee Friends Monthly Meeting

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed this journal. It was a pleasure to read. Many thanks for your work.

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Ellen Swanson

Minneapolis Friends Monthly Meeting

I especially appreciated the more personal experiences and memory/reflections. These were by Jim Lovestar and Travis DuPriest. I learn best from stories and experiences that include reflection. I hope to see more of these, and that is how I could contribute if you use them.

Belinda Thielen

Kenosha-Racine Friends Worship Group

There is a unique connection among Friends who sit in silence together for many years. I cherish that connection. The first edition of *NYM Journal* provided an unexpected opportunity to deepen that connection. The writing published in *NYM Journal* gave me a glimpse into the deepest thoughts of some dear Friends (along with some Friends I do not know). We have so much to learn from each other. I look forward to future editions of this valuable publication.

May 2019 Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Session Epistle

May 27, 2019



El Salvador Visitors, Vilma Posada de Ochoa and Juan Miguel Rodriguez, at the Annual Session with Northern Yearly Meeting Clerk Dave Minden, May 25, 2019.

Photo courtesy of NYM

To Friends Everywhere,

Again, we gather in Rosholt, WI as the crabapple trees start to drop their petals in order to bear fruit and we too celebrate our ongoing community and new growth. In this, our 44th year together, we focused on understanding Communication – learning, growing, practicing, and developing our skills. Our theme – Speaking with a Holy Voice: Using Human Words to Communicate Divine Truth – led us to consider what is truly longing to be expressed. We strive to be present to one another in an ongoing effort to learn the skills to build the community in which we wish to live. It seems we get a little closer in these weekends.

We are blessed to have over sixty youth attending the session this weekend, making up a fifth of our total

attendance. They have been engaged in mirth-making and wide exploring, building friendships as they navigate new communities. Themes of communication weave through their projects as they drum together, learn sign language, lead one another in trust walks, make buttons reflecting their faith, engage with visitors from Friends Peace Teams and El Salvador Yearly Meeting, hear a peer presentation on political lobbying, and conduct their own business meetings. Young teens considered a query relevant for all of us: how do you use your holy voice? The work of our youth parallels our own as we all struggle to learn how to listen deeply and discern when Spirit is speaking.

We are building community over informal and serendipitous talks at dinner or down by the water's edge. Sharing s'mores, boating, and meeting for worship, singing together and playing games on the lawn are opportunities to share parts of ourselves with one another. And of course, we demonstrate our commitment through vast volunteerism in youth programs and the attending of several days of Spirit-led Meeting for Business. We are reminded of the power of presence. As part of our ongoing relationship with El Salvador Friends Yearly Meeting, we again hosted three Salvadoran Friends. We heard of the progress made at the two schools under their care, Soyapango and San Ignacio Chalatenango, educating almost 450 students. We shared our traditions of singing at gathering, joining in evening singing, closing meeting for worship with song, and leading Grace at meals. We value the opportunities to build friendships as we communicate across culture and languages.

We celebrate the concrete expressions of our testimonies. We are finding that the use of modern technology is making it easier to register, organize ourselves, meet from a distance, and decrease our carbon footprint for travel. We have committed to fully fund Northern Yearly Meeting representatives' expenses to Friends organizations thereby making these opportunities available to all regardless of financial means. And we continue to express our value of inclusivity with a simple foods cooperative that feeds approximately half of the session attendees.

We continue to learn to integrate as a community of newcomers and longer-term attendees. We are reminded that the responsibility of becoming a whole

community rests with all of us. Are we conscious of things we do that exclude people? Do we continue to remain welcoming and genuinely interested in everyone present?

We wish for our work this weekend to extend into the larger global community like ripples in a pond. We look forward to receiving epistles from other yearly meetings.

El Salvador Friends

This year the El Salvador Committee hosted two official visitors from El Salvador Yearly Meeting at the Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Session. Representatives Juan Miguel Rodriguez and Vilma Posada de Ochoa presented NYM with a plaque commemorating our many years of friendship and our support of their Friends Schools in Soyapango and San Ignacio. Our visitors also traveled to the Twin Cities and Ripon Wisconsin during their stay.

This Meal Blessing was sung by the Friends from El Salvador during the Annual Session:

DEMOS GRACIAS AL SEÑOR

Demos gracias al Señor, demos gracias
Demos gracias al Señor
Demos gracias al Señor, demos gracias
Demos gracias por su amor.

Por las mañanas las aves cantan
Las alabanzas de Cristo el Salvador
Y tu mi amigo ¿por qué no cantas
Las alabanzas de Cristo el Salvador?

Let's give thanks to the Lord, let's give thanks,
Let's give thanks to the Lord
Let's give thanks to the Lord, let's give thanks,
Let's give thanks to the Lord.

In the morning the birds sing
Praises to Christ the Savior.
And you friend, Why don't you sing
Praises to Christ the Savior?



*El Salvador Committee and Visitors; (Left to right)
Annika Fjelstad, Juan Miguel Rodriguez, Kat Griffith,
Vilma Posada de Ochoa, Ralph Jacobson, Jim Crawford.
Photo courtesy of NYM*

2019 Travel Minute For Jerry Knutson

*Stephanie Preston
Clerk, Orlando Monthly Meeting*

Greetings from Clerk, Orlando (FL) Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

We ask that you welcome and care for our member, Jerry Knutson, as he travels in the ministry with a concern for teaching about spirituality, discernment, Quakerism, the Bible and Prisoner Visitation and Support. Since April 2015, Orlando Monthly Meeting has taken his ministry under its care.

Jerry Knutson is a snowbird and has dual memberships in Quakers of Orlando, FL and Morgantown, WV. He began worshipping with Quakers in the mid 80's. He was a residential student at Pendle Hill in 2002 and 2003. He was a Released Friend from Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting from 2005 to 2014. He has been visiting prisoners in Maximum Security Federal Prisons since 2007. He received a Master of Divinity Degree from Earlham School of Religion in May of 2014 with an emphasis in Christian Spirituality. In 2017, Pendle Hill published his pamphlet (PHP #443) "*Individual Spiritual Discernment: Receiving, Testing, and Implementing Leadings from a Higher Power.*" His pamphlet sold out in 14 months making it Pendle Hill's best-selling

pamphlet. He has facilitated/taught workshops in 24 states, Washington DC, Bethlehem, Palestine and Nakuru, Kenya.

Jerry's ministry, grounded in his education and experience with Quakers, has enriched our meeting and we trust it will enrich your gathering.

Epistle Of The Northern Yearly Meeting High School Group

May 27, 2019



Photo: Public Domain

Friday evening began the annual session with an orientation to youth and parents where the schedule and the expectations for the weekend were agreed. Following this, high schoolers enthusiastically participated in "Cooperative Musical Chairs" and "Snakes and Dinosaurs." The next morning, high schoolers attended welcoming meeting for worship, then assembled in the cabin to listen to guest speakers from various Quaker organizations describe volunteer opportunities and facilitate discussion. Lunch broke the morning program, then in the free time that followed, high schoolers gathered in smaller groups to play card games, go swimming, and/or go boating. The afternoon was active, but relaxed in schedule. At 3:30, all of the high schoolers were driven to Belt's Ice Cream Stand by parent volunteers, in a change from

previous years when this was done on Sunday. This was changed to avoid clashing with the Sunday talent show. Upon return, high schoolers enjoyed free time until dinner, after which some went boating and some relaxed. At 8:00, high schoolers gathered for business meeting, when retreats and coordinators were reviewed. The meeting decidedly ceased at 9:10 to avoid past long business meetings. After business meeting, some went folk dancing, others stargazed in the woods, and others still relaxed. At the 11:00 curfew, some regrouped to watch *Pitch Perfect*, then, the evening was done. On Sunday, after breakfast some groovy high schoolers wrote the Epistle while others volunteered their time with other youth groups, namely preschool, younger and older elementary. Following this, the group gathered as a whole to discuss the Friends Peace Teams with Nadine Hoover. Then the High School Coordinator, Cynthia, organized a multi-cabin scavenger hunt with both the middle schoolers and high schoolers. After lunch, there was free time, then a talent show open to the entire gathering. The rest of the afternoon passed similarly to Saturday afternoon, with the business meeting focusing on nominating and discerning clerks. The day ended with the annual midnight hike around the lake. Monday morning ended our session with closing worship and goodbyes.

New High School Clerks Team:

Presiding clerk: Maya Colby

Recording clerk: Mary Asch

Nurturing clerk: Marleigh Van Dellen

Co-organizing clerks: Celeste Thalhammer and Zoe Schnell.

What Do Retreats Mean To You?

Cynthia Drake

Keweenaw Friends Monthly Meeting

I am currently and have been for a full season plus, the High School Coordinator for Northern Yearly Meeting. You all support an incredible energy when you offer up this program to the High School Youth. Since being honored with this work, I have been in awe of these youth whom we serve and support through the High School Program. We are collectively creating something that will ripple out in ways we cannot now imagine. I asked as many of the youth as I

was able who attended the Annual Session this question: What do retreats and Northern Yearly Meeting gathering mean to you? Here are their responses:

“Increased sense of community and reinforcing of friendship which lasts your whole life.” Galen

“A time to be free from responsibilities, you don’t have to take care of anything, it is done for us. A time to have fun with friends.” Zekiah

“A chance to talk to people about Quakerism. And also have a chance to play games; it is very enjoyable.” George

“Community building.” Amaru

“Everything. It was fun.” Ben

“Make new friends, have a really good time. I get an outlet for my stress. It is very nice.” Samantha

“They are fun and I have people that I know.” Mary

“I love the social aspect of being in the Quaker community with people of my own age - teens, because we have a lot in common. I like the discussions and information we gain.” Celeste

“Community, because the people are nice. The activities are fun and I learn things. Also getting to spend time with people who are not my friends at school, a break from this. I wanted to come to retreats but orchestra and a concert and I was sick kept me away.” Owen

“Friendship. Feel a great sense of community and meeting new people.” Indigo

“For me a time of growth, all of the good points and the struggles. I leave a better person than I came, a more tired but a better person.” Marleigh

“Stress relief during the school year. Whenever I go to these retreats I feel relief, I don’t have to worry about things.” Lucy

I have been a quiet observer (in the Quaker fashion) much of the time as I get to know the youth and gain perspective on how to best facilitate support for them

in our larger Quaker community. I see how they are under so much pressure in the “outer world” with all that is going on as they try to meet the demands of life and their place in it. They also have grown up in an “age of information” and have had relentless bombardment by the “gloom and doom” of our current days. This weighs heavily on their shoulders. As very conscientious beings from Quaker families, they are striving and wanting to “make things better” and yet they feel greatly overwhelmed. I find the retreats to be a safe haven for the youth to gather, to take stock of where they are in it all, to take a load off for a while and just BE youth for a tiny bit and to enjoy camaraderie, fun and games and just “chill time” in community for a while.



Photo: Public Domain

I so appreciate those of you, who have opened up your worship spaces for our weekend gatherings, helped to be Kindly Adult Presences, helped with a presentation or facilitated a volunteer or other outing while we gather. I know that the youth are appreciative of you “holding space” for their collective regeneration and healing. Sometimes it might not feel like we participate directly in your worship community, but I hope that you can understand that the worship we are experiencing is one of respite for the soul and bringing back the joy of living. I believe that our Quaker faith allows for the simplicity of these in fostering our youth to go “back out there” and face all that they need to face. To this end, when we gather, our Sunday mornings are our “closure time” together and so this can create some tension of “cross purposes” with the hosting community, as the youth mostly want to be together and gather as a group to wrap up an often emotionally enriched time together. Consequently, we may seem insular at that point in

our gathering and less open to coming to worship or first day school in the hosting worship space. Worship takes on many forms and closing our precious and short time together is very important in our path during the retreat. Thank you for your understanding and support of this enriched and beautiful program, the Northern Yearly Meeting High School Program.

I will close with a 99 word “flash fiction” I wrote about the youth and the rest of us at the Annual Session in May and read at the talent show:

Notes @ Gen Z

Dishonored childhood
Innocence stripped too soon.
Age of information.
Explosion of anxiety.
Conscientiousness leading to overwhelm.
Weight buries hearts beneath the surface.
Stone faces arise facing a world left
to clean up by hands
willing but not culpable.

Tremoring in the fractured distraction of hopes
dashed by
the waves of overwhelm.

How can we find our way
and build a bridge back to
each other?

Respectful engagement.
Ears to the ground.
Egos to the backseat.
Curiosity and validation.
Vulnerability and connection.
Growing and tending shoots
of possibility. It is not either
or it is both and rising up
together.

Visit the NYM website

www.northernyearlymeeting.org

for more Information about NYM including Publications, Sessions and a listing of NYM Meetings and Worship Groups. You will find many pages under the “About” menu. You may wish to subscribe to the monthly NYM e-News for regular updates, announcements and resources.

2060: *Looking Back At War*

Vincent Kavaloski

Madison Friends Monthly Meeting



Graphic: Public Domain

Once almost half a century ago, there lived a mighty nation, but a confused government. The people of this nation loved peace, they valued social justice and human rights, but they believed these could flourish only in the shadow of the gun. They built the most powerful military machine the world had ever seen and sent it out across the lands and seas of Earth in “global reach.” It was built for war, and war was what it reaped. It sought out their enemies implacably and buried them and those around them in an inferno of death and destruction.

But, the more they killed, the more they arose, because the families and friends and neighbors and sympathizers of the killed sought revenge and vengeance. Thus, violence bred more violence and sadness and a flood of hate enveloped the land ...

People began to contemplate the terrible suffering of death and destruction; the millions of families uprooted from their homes and made refugees, the sick and hungry children, the bombed-out buildings, the epidemic of fear that afflicted all. Is violence the solution to violence?

In the hearts and minds of this great people, a new awareness grew like a powerful vine, spreading the realization that true peace requires peaceful means: constant warfare cannot bring peace. So, they pulled back their mighty war machine and sent out

ambassadors of peace, reconciliation and humanitarian aid.

What did they do? We do not know the whole story. However, we do know one thing. They began by listening to the people called “enemies.”

They finally remembered, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Holding Our Families

In The Light

Dan O’Keefe

Milwaukee Friends Monthly Meeting

Part 1: A Look at the 2018 Family Interviews

Many Years - Many Changes

Quaker meetings and worship groups have come a long way from 1696, when William Penn published his understanding of Quakerism in *Primitive Christianity Revived*, an important Quaker reference. Quakers now worship all over the United States. Our movement has certainly grown. One can say that an important idea contributed by Quakerism was the need to go it alone spiritually; that is, without the benefit of professional clergy.

During the past three hundred years, daily life for every Quaker family has changed. Families have two wage earners, or only one parent. We spend over an hour a day in automobiles going to work and fulfilling family needs. The speed of communication has changed the way we relate to our families and our communities. In 1696, there were not so many demands. Then, meetings spent many hours at a time together. During those many hours, families could come to know one another, share experiences, offer advice, and provide meaningful pastoral care.

Over time, meetings have adapted to modern society with websites, social media, and Skype. Meetinghouses have modern kitchens, parking lots, and in-house computers, but what about the not so obvious changes involving human interaction? Fortunately, the subtle social changes that may be affecting Quaker meetings are being uncovered and understood with the use of modern examination tools.



Windy Cooler: Photo courtesy of Windy Cooler

Windy Cooler, an Earlham School of Religion divinity student, has applied research techniques in her project, “Holding Our Families in the Light.” She interviewed 92 families at eight different yearly meetings during the summer of 2018, including Northern Yearly Meeting.

Windy's Research

Windy structured her project by choosing to interview families at annual gatherings of yearly meetings, because they had long-term experience in their Quaker communities. Her interviews consisted of asking four basic questions: “What is your family?” The next was, “How did you decide they were your family?” Then she asked for a story about their family. After listening to the answer to this question, Windy described the values revealed in those answers to the interviewees. Windy wanted to be sure that she understood their answers. Once they agreed, Windy then asked her final question, “Do you see those values represented in the monthly meeting you belong to?”

To this last question, these families would enthusiastically agree, and provide many examples of their shared values. However, as they talked, many families began to describe incidents when they were slighted or hurt at their meetings. Some incidents were

social slights, such as when someone said something inappropriate or rude to them. Other incidents involved promises not kept by someone or a committee, often a clearness or a care committee. For example, a request to meet with a committee would be met with comments that their need was not pressing enough, that the family should handle it on their own, or they were simply ignored. Most importantly, each family reported that they were unable to speak to anyone else at their meetings about these things. In fact, Windy found that she was the first Quaker to whom they had revealed these difficulties.

Windy is careful to emphasize that there were many different experiences. She was surprised by the large number of families reporting an inability to speak to anyone at their meetings about their unmet needs. This summer, Windy has been sharing her results in workshops with each yearly meeting that participated in her research. She presents her findings and asks for comments. After completing her tour of each yearly meeting, Windy will be publishing her study in a book.

Part 2: Reflections on Windy's Research

At the Annual Session of the Northern Yearly Meeting, more than ten individuals attended Windy's workshop, including this writer. To understand her research further, I met with Windy at the Annual Session of the Illinois Yearly Meeting this past July. What follows are my observations at the workshop and from our discussion in July.

Meetings as Family

Windy explained how each family she interviewed talked about their meetings with the same emotional tones of familiarity and concern that they would have with their own families. For example, when describing an incident, instead of the impersonal "it," the pronoun "they" was always preferred as if the whole meeting had let them down. In addition, many incidents were expressed in the tone of a "betrayal" as if a family member had not lived up to familial expectations or obligations. Trouble spots seemed to center around promises made, spoken or unspoken, in clearness or care committees.

The most important insight offered by Windy's

research is that the families feel unable to share the feelings and incidents they experienced in their meetings with their Quaker sisters and brothers. Especially noteworthy were the difficulties the families expressed in sharing their feelings of being let down or betrayed by their own communities.

The Challenge of Pastoral Needs

Windy reported that many care-oriented committees, like ministry and counsel, feel overwhelmed with the needs of their meetings. The pastoral needs of a meeting can vary from short-term personal queries to difficult marital situations. Much time, skill and flexibility is often required to handle such a wide variety of situations. Windy also described an ironic characteristic of these same overwhelmed committees: they spend too much time on one person, a member with a legitimate issue but whose mental illness makes resolution difficult.

One workshop participant asked if the committee members needed to learn to manage their time and determine priorities through in-house seminars or local courses. The habit of concentrating on one individual indicates a need to understand the many elements involved in pastoral care. Specialized training can also help develop the many skills needed to carry out pastoral duties respectfully.

It was suggested that the inability of committee members to meet with families in need could be due to a lack of personal time that results from pressures to provide financially for themselves or their families. On the other hand, perhaps, Quakers may need to rethink the time-consuming nature of committee work and Worship with Attention to Business.

Another workshop participant commented about the discretion that needs to be exercised when a request for care cannot be met. When a committee determines that they cannot properly respond to a request for pastoral care, they are obligated to help find another way to meet those needs. Furthermore, before the committee makes any commitments or promises, they should let the person or persons making the request know that they may be unable to meet those pastoral needs. Such careful handling will avert some of the disappointment and pain of those needing pastoral care.

The Need To Be True and Loving

One response to Windy's findings might be that many organizations, including faith communities and families, have communication problems. Another might be that the expectation of our meetings to carry out true and loving communication is just too hard.

On the other hand, Windy's research can help us realize that speaking truthfully and lovingly to one another is, indeed, difficult. Moreover, when we do gather up the courage to express our truths as an honest need, a sense of unfairness, disappointment, or despair, we may be afraid we will lose the love of our meetings. Even the possibility of rejection brings on feelings of being unloved, ignored or unworthy, and we lose hope and energy. In the end, when we cannot engage truthfully and lovingly with one another, we might begin to feel isolated and ultimately become silent.

We need to figure out how to talk with our Quaker sisters and brothers. To encourage us to speak truthfully and lovingly, we need to help our meetings understand the underlying message of Windy's research: that many of our Friends are experiencing difficult feelings and situations within their meetings but are unable to talk about these things with their fellow Quakers.

A start would be to bring in professionals or traveling ministers to talk about this as part of adult religious education. Offer workshops at the meetinghouse for everyone. One way to foster new behavior is to end a committee meeting or event by asking the participants what went well in interactions with one another and what they can do to make them even better. After meeting for worship, we can build our communication skills by asking one another about each other's worship experience. This shared experience would bring congregations together, and build up a spiritual energy.

Moving Forward

We Quakers have always liked doing everything ourselves – without clergy or anyone else. This ethos, so unique to Quakers, is deeply etched in our meeting budgets. We use very little, if any, of our financial resources to understand and provide pastoral care, as well as other important human relationship skills like

conflict management, time management, and basic leadership training.

All of us know that times have changed; and Windy has introduced meaningful information that allows us to understand that our members are not having their pastoral needs met fully. We may have to admit that we have heavy demands on our time. Our local meetings may have to engage in deep self-reflection. We will have to adopt a different approach. We can bring together the best attributes of our Quaker “go it alone” ethos: a strong work ethic and a can-do attitude. We can learn true and loving communication with the help of human relations professionals, and work these ideas into our meetings and daily lives. It can be our “practice.” It can be our meeting's shared spiritual experience. The word “practice” clearly says that we will not get it right every time.

This “practice” can be how we take care of each other. This is what William Penn wrote about in 1696. This desire for care does not change. For reasons over which none of us has any control, we have to go about taking care of each other in different ways. We have always come together to care for each other. This is what we do.

About the NYM Journal

The NYM Journal aims to inform and inspire Friends with examples of Quaker faith and practice.

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Duluth-Superior Friends Meeting

The NYM Journal is available to the public and posted on the NYM website:

www.northernyearlymeeting.org

Friends of Northern Yearly Meeting are encouraged to submit creative artistic work and writing, including personal reflections and articles about your work and experiences as Quakers, to

nymjournal@gmail.com

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On Sustaining An Activist Life

Annika Fjelstad

Twin Cities Friends Monthly Meeting



Betsy Raasch-Gilman

Photo courtesy of Annika Fjelstad

Many feel overwhelmed or tempted by despair in response to the enormity of the social and political problems in our country. When these themes became too prominent within Twin Cities Friends Meeting, Betsy Raasch-Gilman responded by pulling together a list of mindsets and strategies that help her sustain an activist life. When Betsy speaks on sustainability, she has credibility.

Betsy remembers attending the first demonstration in Minnesota against the Viet Nam war in 1965 as a thirteen year old with her mother. Fifty-two years later, she cites a steady stream of movements, organizations and causes that reflect the imprint and the success of her strategic and persistent engagement. The Black Power movement had a deep impact on her from her time at Central High School, one of the few integrated high schools in St. Paul at the time. During college, she discovered feminism and the ecological movement and became one of the founding collective

of the first battered women's shelter in the nation. She organized against nuclear power in the 1970s, advocated for the Pledge of Resistance against the invasion of Nicaragua in the 1980s. In the 1990s, she consolidated much of what she knew about organizing for social change by co-founding Future Now: Training Collective to offer advice on meeting facilitation, conflict management, consensus decision making, strategic planning and grassroots fundraising. She is clear on how these fifteen years of leadership solidified many healthy and functional grassroots organizations including food cooperatives, environmental programs, neighborhood organizations, and even the farm movement. In 1999, she joined forces with Training for Change from Philadelphia to train for nonviolent direct action against the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle. Her experiences with direct action helped strategically channel and direct the energy of the over 50,000 protestors who showed up and effectively closed down those meetings. This work led to nonviolence trainings for seven or eight years of globalization mobilizations. Without showing a trace of despair or burnout, Betsy muses that she can see her next 20-25 years of organizing to be focused on addressing structural racism, work rooted in and sustained through Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ). She works with white people to understand and buy into reparations and to build support for prison and police abolition work. How she frames the outcomes of the trade agreement meetings demonstrate some of the perspectives that give Betsy the stamina to stay with the work.

1. Look for what is going right, rather than only at what is going wrong.

While many focus on deficiencies of trade agreements that do exist, she knows enough of the backstory to know what could have come about without non-violent direct action intervention. "There is no Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Those transatlantic corporate leaders would have designed a comprehensive agreement that covered the continent, from Patagonia to Hudson Bay, in ways that served their interests." That died in Miami. When the international negotiators did their final communicate they stated, "Nothing much has been accomplished and we must go back to the drawing table." They never came back. The U.S. realized it would not be able to negotiate a trade agreement on the scale that

they had imagined; they went to work on regional trade agreements instead. Lead negotiators from countries that would have been hurt by those agreements came out to the street and asked protesters to sustain their presence.

2. Take the long view.

Some people want to give up because a particular short-term action appears to make no difference or worse backfire. “Think chess,” she says. “It’s a game of strategy. You do not stop playing the game because your opponent takes your Rook. You turn around and take their Bishop. Social change, like other games of strategy such as Bridge or Battleship, rely on outwitting your opponent. You make a good move and you can expect a good countermove. An accomplished chess player is working five or six moves ahead.”

3. Build your strategic muscle as a movement-including a healthy sense of competition.

When Betsy does trainings for nonviolent action, she creates scenarios where protestors get down on the floor and enter honest scuffles. One exercise is to try to remove each other’s socks. The winner is the last one with his or her own socks on. While amusing in nature, the intent is serious, and so are the scuffles that ensue. The participants need to engage in both defensive and offensive tactics. A clear winner emerges, but not without a few scrapes and scratches. Winning usually involves some risk-taking. Have we played cooperative games for too long? “Learn competitive games to develop your strategic muscle,” says Betsy. “I play to win,” she says unapologetically. “I don’t want to wake up some morning to see fascists in charge.”

4. Research and study people’s movements and periods when change was most obvious; also the times before and after those shifts.

The 1920s through the 1950s in the U.S. was a time of tremendous change, led by some powerful people’s movements. Betsy is always on the lookout for inspiration in ways that people elsewhere in the world and in other centuries have dealt with terrible situations. The response of Argentinians to a terrible economic meltdown in 2005 is one of the examples to which she frequently returns.

5. Identify the unintended consequences that are present in big reverses.

When Betsy looks at the 2016 election, she focuses on the jump in activism and engagement of the citizenry that has come as a result. She sees big setbacks as furrowing the soil in which new seeds of change are planted.

6. Recognize the predictable phases of a movement for social change.

The book *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*, (Engler & Engler, 2016) details a history of successful movements for social change in the 21st century. Read it. It is a reminder of the successes we have made and is a primer on effective strategies that work. Be able to distinguish a movement from an event. “Occupy Wall Street wasn’t a movement -- it was an event, and a tactic. The movement is for economic justice, and continues today”, she says, “Don’t get hung up on events or tactics that didn’t yield results. Understand how they fit into the arc of dialogue towards actual change.”

7. Focus on the roles for social change that draw on your strength.

Work in coalition with those playing other roles. In trade agreement work some agencies played the inside game bringing up concerns through legitimate channels. Those willing and able to draw attention to that work through direct action and civil disobedience complemented their work. Betsy is most in her element in the rebel role. She focuses on areas that draw on that strength and respects the ways that the work of others with their unique skill sets and mindsets do complementary work. “I admire the people that work within the system to make change, but when I’m invited to participate I keep my focus on working outside the system.” Other vital roles include reformers, who ensure accountability of enforcement once changes are agreed. Fighting for new policies will not yield results without those designed to build in accountability for the implementation of those policies.

8. Ignore social media as a news source.

Know the sources that you trust to give you information. Focus on the initiatives that you are

deeply committed to and get information directly. To avoid distraction of a lot of surface information from potentially questionable sources. Betsy acknowledges that she has missed some events that were only publicized through Facebook, but maintaining face-to-face connections with groups she trusts and knows is worth the cost.

9. Accept the fact that we will never arrive; we will always be building the new society, never fully living in it.

“I base a lot of my hope on the in-breaking kingdom of God that is both here and not here; yet and not yet. We are in the process of building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven. The image that we are getting it and we are approximating it is a powerful one. We get closer. We have a setback and we regroup. It is always possible. It is always in-breaking. I find that an informative piece of the Jesus message.”

For one thing Betsy casts her net wide in the range of ways she envisions what she calls activism. Traditionally, political approaches include being elected, organizing within political parties, fostering community in neighborhoods, lobbying for legislation and organizing pressure groups such as labor unions, neighborhoods, national peace and justice organizations. These are complimented by actions such as raising children with good values, personal growth, healing from abuse and maintaining mental health.



Graphic: Public Domain

Queries

Power: Who has the most power to change things? Consumers? Judges? The military and police? Corporate owners? Government officials? Workers? Youth? Media? Prayerful people? Professors?

How does change happen? From the list of different kinds of activism, which methods have the quickest results? The most long-lasting results? Can you see sequences and interplays between them?

Is it already too late? Too late for what? Do you brace yourself for/hope for/expect a catastrophic event that will change everything, whether we like it or not? How does this expectation affect your activism?

Chart of different kinds of activism

- Getting elected or appointed to an influential position
- Teaching, training
- Forming alternative economic institutions (co-ops, credit unions, revolving loan funds, reparations projects)
- Cultural work through writing, music, performance, visual arts, etc.
- Examining our own racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, etc. (internalized and not). Working the intersections of these things
- Personal growth on conducting conflict, conscientious parenting, healing from abuse, maintaining mental health
- Developing spiritual grounding and practices that support activism
- Fostering community in neighborhoods, households, schools, etc., with attention to self-government
- Working within a political party
- Lobbying for legislation and regulations; pressuring public officials
- Organizing pressure groups (labor unions, neighborhood, national peace/justice organizations)
- Protesting in the streets; risking arrest; going to trial
- Raising children with good values
- Military tax resistance
- Lawsuits and legal actions
- Careful consumer choices; responsible investment; observing boycotts; lowering our own carbon footprints
- Participating in a sustained campaign (which may involve many of these other actions)

Making Capital Work For Social Justice

Ralph Jacobson
Prospect Hill Friends Monthly Meeting

The intent of this article is to show how some of our Quaker testimonies helped to turn a breakdown into a breakthrough, and build a relationship between two communities.

Part 1: “My Quest to Understand Capital” in Volume 1, Issue 1 of *NYM Journal*.

Part 2: Crowdfunding for a Solar Array

The Red Lake Solar Project

In 2015, the Red Lake Tribal Council began to study what it would take to move away from fossil fuels and use solar energy to provide the electric power for their community of over 5,000 members. The economic driver to “go solar” up there is a different sort of calculation than the usual payback analysis which just considers how many years of savings and incentives it will take to recoup the initial cost. The Tribe has perpetual treaty rights to the walleye fishery in the Red Lake, and they do depend heavily on the fish for food and income. They are witnessing the slow build-up of mercury in the water, deposited by the plumes



The Red Lake Government Center, where the first solar array of the Red Lake Solar Project quietly produces electricity behind the sheltering arms of the Red Lake Eagle.

Photo courtesy of Ralph Jacobson

of smoke that drift eastward from the coal plants out west that generate the electric power that they buy from the local power coop. Their calculation is about how many decades of not burning coal it will take the mercury to sequester naturally out of the biosphere.

The Red Lake Solar Project has a triple mission: the solar arrays will generate clean energy for the community, of course, but they will also serve as an economic development platform for training tribe members as solar installers. Beyond that, the arrays will form the basis of a solar energy utility that will be owned and managed by the Tribe. I got involved when I was hired to study ten of their public buildings to determine their suitability for solar, and in late 2016 we presented the results to the Tribal Council. With the promise of a financing plan with “big capital” from several multi-national corporations, it looked like we could hire people over the winter and start building solar arrays by early 2017.

A Breakdown of Trust Creates an Opening

Ah, but the finance partner for the Tribe’s solar project was unable to interest any corporations. A second individual then promised his own plan, but he went “radio silent.” As we waited, I became more and more uncomfortable being part of a team that was failing to deliver a promised project to an Indigenous community. If integrity is “You do what you said you were going to do,” it sure was not happening here. As we later found out, the usual capital sources were afraid of sovereignty issues on Native American lands, and this project did not offer enough incentives to offset those risks.

The Testimony of Integrity Is the Key to Building Trust

Given the history of broken trust between Native Americans and Euro Americans, it was plain to me that the testimony of integrity would be of paramount importance in any arrangement going forward. “Doing what you said you were going to do,” meant, first, not promising more than what could be realistically delivered. Of course, the project should be delivered on time and on budget. Nevertheless, unexpected obstacles do stretch out timelines and cause cost overruns, and so integrity meant regular, and sometimes difficult, communication to manage expectations and maintain trust.

Bringing it to My Community

At the Transition USA conference, I had recently seen some examples of what could be done with local capital, so Gene MacArthur, the economic development coordinator for Red Lake, and I agreed to try that approach. With the help of an experienced investment attorney, we created Plan B, a “crowdfunding” scheme. In the back of my mind, I was aware that there had been conversations floating around among the Minnesota Quakers for years around the topic of impact investing. Well here was a real project that directly addressed the concerns we share: racial justice, care for the Earth, and people-centered economics! So then, I turned to my local Friends community, and pursued those conversations in earnest.



On the day of the utility witness test, December 20, 2018, we swept snow off the solar panels. The system began producing power on the shortest day of the year! Yup, that's Red Lake in the background.

Photo courtesy of Ralph Jacobson

Way Opens Anyway: The Testimony of Simplicity to the Rescue!

We talked about forming a company in which all participants would put in money and be co-owners of the solar arrays we would build. Then an astute member of Prospect Hill Friends Meeting asked how they would be able to utilize the solar tax credit if they were only a passive investor in this scheme. My first thought was “Oh no, then we can't do this after all.” However, I had also been exploring the possibility of

getting a bank loan for part of the financing, and I had just been refused by a fifth bank. In exasperation, I asked our attorney if we could make all of the participants lenders instead of equity investors. It turns out, that was a whole lot simpler for everybody!

To avoid a lot of tax filing headaches for everyone, we decided simply to take loans ranging up to \$10,000. The only tax consequence for all parties is the interest that they will be paid annually with their loan repayment. As the active manager of the company formed to own and operate the solar power system, I can take the tax credits against my ordinary income and use the resulting tax returns to pay back the loans from everybody else. Really, this feels to me like being a mouse, finding a big piece of cheese, splitting it up with all the other mice – and getting a solar array out of the effort!

A Testament to the Power of Community

I have found that in this model, the equity investor can contribute a relatively small amount of money and use the solar tax credit tax returns to pay down the many small loans from people, which provide most of the money for the project. I suppose that someone with more resources could finance a larger solar project. However, this demonstrates that relationships built on trust are essential to attract the little pieces of local capital that are needed to finance something like a solar project.

We began the conversations in the fall of 2017, and they continued through 2018. I received the last microloan needed to complete the first solar array from a friend just before the end of the year. In all, twenty-three Friends, friends, and family were inspired and trusting enough to participate in funding the first solar array, which now sits on the roof of the Red Lake Government Center. We chose this because it is the smallest of the ten buildings we studied for solar, and therefore would be the easiest to test out the crowdfund approach. We successfully raised almost \$125,000 this way, and so now, we are planning to raise the funds for the next solar array through a portal created by Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, on a website – (MnVest.org/Portals/; MNVEST Registration Exemption of 2018), which the Minnesota Legislature created for crowdfunding.

A Strategy Based on Faith

The solar power system passed the utility witness test and became operational just before the 2018 winter solstice. Wait a minute – how could the solar array be completed before we had all the money to build it? I guess you could say that there was a psychological side to this. Because the Tribe had been waiting for so long, Gene and I decided that each time we brought in another \$25,000, we would spend it to accumulate materials, and then to install them. I would not normally operate that way, but here I really wanted to show progress. In order to get started from nothing, where we had no solar arrays and no track record yet, this approach built up some momentum so that we could pursue a strategy of funding and building the solar arrays one at a time, each one building that track record and stimulating more conversations about “local capital.”

Local Capital: The Money Actually Reached the Workers!

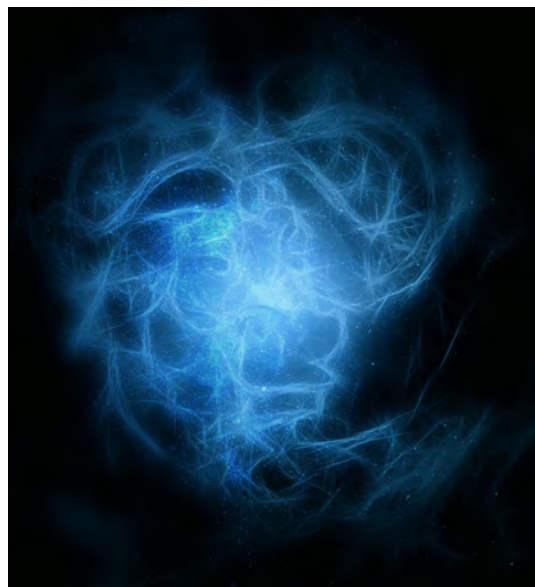
It was fortunate that, when I was ready to start spending money, a member of the Tribe was following his dream and in the process of setting up a solar installation company. His timing could not have been better, and this project helped him to get started. This arrangement completely sidestepped the negotiation that many contractors have to go through when they do work on the Reservation, establishing minimum quotas for hiring members of the Tribe. In our case, almost all of the installation work was done by Tribal members who were already very construction savvy. I am looking forward to working with them again!

One of the economic development goals is that tribal members will have enough confidence in the financing model, that they can make microloans to the Red Lake Solar Project, and through that can invest in their community. (We are able to offer 2.5% annual interest, compared to more like 1% that they might earn at a bank.) It is very appropriate that the second solar array will be installed on the Red Lake Nation Oshkiimaajitahdah, the workforce development center, where much custom training can be done for the variety of skill sets needed - from installing solar panels to operating a state-of-the-art solar utility!

Working With “That Of God In Everyone”

Sam Johnson

Cannon Valley Friends Monthly Meeting



Graphic: Public Domain

As Quakers, we often repeat only a phrase from George Fox’s best known statement: “Walk cheerfully over the earth, answering that of God in everyone.” We use the phrase “that of God in everyone” as a code for Quaker action and social justice. In other words, we **speak** part of the quotation and **act** on the imperative in the rest of the quotation by going into the world and trying to provide answers in the form of service to the needs that we perceive in others.

There will be much discussion of what “that of God in everyone” asks of us, but a few things can be agreed upon from looking at the extensive forms of Quaker ministry and service.

First, we need to speak of what manifestations of God (or some similar synonym) are apparent in everyone. These manifestations would include the power of love, care, an altruism committed to harmony and balance, and a sense of equality. Traditionalists would see these elements at work in the first creation story in *The Book of Genesis*. These manifestations in us can be thought of as seeds to be nourished.

Second, Quaker social action and service reflect a commitment to nourish these qualities. The qualities may also be seen as essential elements undergirding

our testimonies. We consciously choose to act in a way that upholds human dignity; creates room for personal growth and enfranchisement; acknowledges others' freedom to make positive choices for themselves and others. In addition, if we take the rest of the Fox quotation seriously we should be acting and answering with a sense of joy in what we do.

Next, we need to consider the statement "that of God." We use it a great deal. It is almost formulaic in our discussions of why we act as we do. If we listen to the way we use the phrase, "everyone" points to others or someone "out there." We seldom include ourselves. The challenge then is to take time to turn our attention around and look within. Each of us needs to ask, "What is there of God within me?" There is no better place to begin this process of inquiry than in the silence of our unprogrammed worship.

Turning one's gaze inward is not easy. We may even be shocked at what we find. In silence, we come to know ourselves better than we can know others. It is worth remembering what the Roman playwright Terence said: *Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum*

puto. Loosely translated this means *I am human and consider nothing that is human foreign to me*. We wait upon the movement of the Spirit as we sit in silence. That movement is not always going to be joyous and uplifting.

As we do this, we can think of ourselves as practicing a kind of mirrored wisdom. Is what we see in others reflected in ourselves? Is what we want for others reflected in what we want to develop in ourselves? We can choose the facets of our character we want to develop and diminish the others that disturb us. We learn to model in our beliefs and actions what we hope to nourish in others.

Quaker faith and testimonies are fluid and evolutionary. There is no list of what we must believe. This seeming vagueness is actually a source of strength. Instead of specific outcomes, we can encourage each person to make the best and most wholesome choices. One of those choices is to find the balance between what we want to say is "that of God" in others and working to know what of "that of God" is within ourselves.
