



NYM Journal

Friends EnLightening Friends

Volume 2 | Issue 3

A Publication of Northern Yearly Meeting

Spring 2021

Letter from the Editor

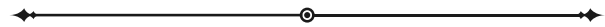
Tom Darrow
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

Let's begin with the good news. The Communication Committee is very happy to announce that the Northern Yearly Meeting has officially adopted a new logo. This appears above in our masthead. Working for almost three years, the Committee consulted Friends widely and through the combined efforts of members' ideas, accepted the generous and talented work of our member, Bill Hendricks, to represent who we are in graphic form. NYM encompasses the upper Midwestern states that have sprawling prairies. A variety of grasses and flowers fill these open expanses. Common to this land is the open sky where the North Star is clearly visible. All of these components become symbolic of who we are as the Northern Yearly Meeting: a diverse worshipping community spread across the northern plains and prairies of our country, joined in fellowship and guided by the Spirit.

While this New Year has been filled with hope for a change in the direction that our country is moving, we still find ourselves mired with some all too familiar issues of gun violence, poverty, results of the pandemic and racism. To some this appears to be disheartening, but the efforts Friends are making nationally and locally are a testimony that we are accepting the challenge to address these issues. In addition, I am encouraged by the recent Chauvin verdict in Minneapolis. The statement of the Floyd family, "This is a victory for those who champion humanity over inhumanity, those who champion justice over injustice, those who champion morals over immorality" paraphrases what we are called to say with the psalmist, "I have done what is just and right." (ESV, Ps. 119:121)

This month we start by offering some preparatory reading written by one of the plenary presenters for the upcoming Annual Session. We also begin a three-part series that first appeared in *Vital Friends – A Resource for Quaker Faith and Life* by the Friends

General Conference. This series is meant to assist local Meetings and Worship Groups in their efforts to recognize and confront racism communally and personally. It is our hope that these outside sources, along with the insights of our own NYM Friends, will help us see that we are moving in the right direction. All of this provides both information about ways to root out racism and the inspiration to persevere in our efforts.



Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness

Lisa Graustein
Beacon Hill Friends Meeting
New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM)

During a conversation about leadership among Friends, the gathered body at Sessions in 2018 yearned for ways to better understand how subtle bias and

Table of Contents

- Letter from the Editor..1
- Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness.1
- About the NYM Journal..2
- Anti-Racism Workshop at Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions.4
- Resurrection.5
- Promises and Lies.5
- Becoming an Anti-Racist Quaker Meeting.6
- Wings7
- Minute Supporting H.R. 40 Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act.7
- Sea of Brilliance.8
- Shall We Gather?..9
- Can One Be Saved in a Quaker Meeting?.. . . .10

systems of oppression operate among us. After some discussion and a threshing session, the following minute was brought to and approved by the body: “the Yearly Meeting [will] develop a practice of appointing people who will observe, name and reflect back to us long-standing, unseen patterns and practices that result in our complicity in oppression. Development of this practice should proceed under the care of Ministry and Council.” (For the full minute, go to this site and scroll down to 2018-53. <https://neym.org/earthcare-ministry/news/2018-minute-calculator-project>)

This fall, a working group was formed by Yearly Meeting Ministry & Counsel to help us develop a practice and name some people to help us do this work. The Working Group for Noticing Patterns of Oppression & Faithfulness held a workshop on March 9th at Wellesley Friends Meeting. Fifty Friends from throughout NEYM, and of all generations, attended.

About the NYM Journal

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

Editor: Tom Darrow
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

Layout: Bill Hendricks
Minneapolis Friends Meeting

The NYM Journal is available to the public and posted on NYM website: northernyearly-meeting.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.

Deadline for submissions for the Summer Issue: July 23, 2021.

No copyright infringement intended in this publication. The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in the NYM Journal belong solely to each author, and do not necessarily reflect the views, thoughts or opinions of the Yearly Meeting, its member meetings or worship groups or officers.

The morning began with naming places we felt seen and a sense of belonging, and moved into an interactive embodiment activity in which we greeted, welcomed, and prayed for each other without using words or sound as a way to help us reconnect with the part of ourselves that can know and understand without words. This also served to remind us that even if we feel new to the work of noticing patterns of oppression or faithfulness, we often can still tap into that gut sense that tells us when things are off or rightly ordered.

Working group members then led a reflection on what faithfulness requires of us and how we can see and name patterns of oppression. We defined patterns of oppression as learned behaviors and ways of being that seek to diminish the humanity of different groups of people. We are taught these patterns, explicitly and implicitly, throughout our lives. While we have often been conditioned to these patterns, when we can name and recognize them, we can interrupt them by acting in ways different to how we have been conditioned and in ways that seek to affirm the humanity of each person.

We spent the afternoon acting out different situations from our Quaker communities, naming the patterns of oppression at play and practicing different ways of interrupting them. Below are two scenarios we used. What are the patterns you see? How might you interrupt or change these moments?

At Rise of Meeting:

Longtime Member #1 “Kathy”:
“Welcome! What brings you here?”

Young Adult Friend (YAF): “Actually, I’ve been coming here for over a year.”

Longtime Member: “Oh, I’m so sorry I didn’t realize this. I can’t believe I never noticed you. I’m so embarrassed. I’m so sorry.”

YAF: I...

Longtime member #2: (without looking at or acknowledging YAF) “Kathy, I’m glad I caught you. I’ve been meaning to talk to you about...”

The longtime members turn towards each other and start talking, ignoring the YAF.

The YAF walks away.



Photo: Kathleen Wooten

Committee Work

The meeting committee working on racial justice puts together a program on microaggressions. At the rise of worship a couple weeks before, we announce the workshop and are transparent/explicit in our welcome to all, while also saying something like—we also understand and respect that Friends of Color might choose not to attend. A few Friends of Color are upset that we had not involved them in developing or planning the workshop, or in some way checking in with them, that as white people we were going off in our direction without accountability.

Throughout the day, Friends were invited to reflect on all that we were learning, exploring, and unpacking. We used simple sentence prompts to help us name some of what was going on:

- I see
- I feel . . .
- I hear
- I know . . .
- I wonder . . .

We invite all Friends to try out these prompts between now and Sessions. Take a few minutes during your business or committee meeting to invite this reflection, share the prompts after watching something with your children or friends, or bring them into your prayer time and worship.

This summer at Sessions, we will be offering different ways that we can all set more fully into the work of naming and interrupting patterns of oppression and lifting up and strengthening our patterns of faithfulness. Check out future newsletters for more information about and opportunities to join in this work.

Quotes from Friends who attended:

“To learn once again, how easy it is to inadvertently exclude someone. The examples we worked on as a group were very helpful in illustrating the ways in which we can diminish others without even realizing it.. What a wonderful introduction to Patterns of Oppression! I left not feeling inadequate (there is so much to learn about oppression) but feeling like I better understand Faithfulness and its importance to eliminating unintentional oppression. Thank you for the safe and inclusive environment. Great facilitation team.” ~ Friend Elizabeth Reuthe

“This was carefully sequenced, with everyone made welcomed and included. The afternoon section on interrupting and refocusing was particularly useful and powerful.” ~ Friend Andy Harrington

“I have come away with a more visceral feeling from noticing oppression and a commitment to pay more attention to that anxiety in my stomach when it arises.” ~ Friend Maureen Lopes

“It was a gift to be a part of this day on naming patterns of oppression. One thing that struck me was how obvious the fruits of the Spirit were in our time together. There was much laughter and levity paired with reverence and vulnerability. So often, it seems that when we are confronted with the ways that we have participated in patterns of thought and behavior that have been wounding, it can feel overwhelming, and we can shut down, feel shame, and deny the truth. My experience of this day was that the facilitators created a space of honesty and vulnerability and the worship helped us all feel held in God’s love, and experience the grace and mercy that is available as we face the many ways that we fall short of God’s vision for us as a whole people, and try (with humility) to live more fully into what is possible. I hope we can all continue to engage in this work with this life-giving orientation.” ~ Friend Honor Woodrow

“The facilitators brought an incredible gift to the group of participants for the workshop. Friends in New England are being invited into an exciting opportunity to learn and grow together, and the activities brought to this workshop deepened relationships and skills. During the workshop, we were brought back to our physical bodies and our intuition, regularly reminded to think about ways we are already being faithful, practiced ways of interrupting harmful patterns with care and love, and grew deeper as a community. ~ Friend Hilary Burgin

(Editor’s Note: This article from the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) News of March 14, 2019 is reprinted with permission. The author will present the plenary at our Annual Session in May on Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness with another Friend from NEYM.)

Anti-Racism Workshop at Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions

Cathy Nagler

Duluth-Superior Friends Monthly Meeting

The Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG) of Northern Yearly Meeting (NYM) continues to work towards an anti-racist Religious Society in their Annual Session’s plenary and workshop offerings. Thursday May 27th at 7 p.m. a plenary session led by Lisa Graustein, Eppchez Yes and LVM Shelton will be leading “Noticing Pattern of Oppression and Faithfulness.” This plenary speakers’ group will be reporting to Annual Session attendees on the practice of noticing, practicing and transforming behaviors around oppression. This plenary will introduce the topic to NYM members in Spirit as a way to raise consciousness to construct a more just and inclusive Northern Yearly Meeting. NYM members wishing to train in “Noticer” practices will be directed to trainings offered for this work.

The Anti-Racism Working Group has an active Subcommittee working under it. This nine-member subcommittee continues its work in Educating individual Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups about the Papal Bull of 1493 that has been labeled the Doctrine of Discovery. *The Doctrine of Discovery* has been discussed in both 2020-21 NYM Interim Sessions resulting in the minute renouncing this Doctrine now found on the NYM website.

The Subcommittee has continued its efforts to educate each Monthly Meeting and Worship Group affiliated with NYM on the stated racism within the Doctrine, with all of these groups having been contacted. Many of these NYM groups have asked for hosted forum discussions on the Doctrine, which are an ongoing offering from the Subcommittee as educational outreach to our Society. The Subcommittee is currently gathering permanent Doctrine of Discovery educational resources that will be available for Meetings and Worship Groups to use.

Finally, ARWG is offering an Annual Session workshop that takes on next steps towards developing respectful relationships with Native Americans in our own communities. This workshop will be co-hosted by Cathy Nagler, and director Rita Davern who has also co-produced with Melody Gilbert the documentary movie *Stories I Didn’t Know*. This documentary chronicles the

journey of Rita, who is White, as she faces truths about an historical family narrative surrounding her grandfather's land on Pike Island, MN. Rita discovers hard realities about our national narrative as she builds relationships with the island's Indigenous inhabitants, Minnesota's Santee Sioux Dakota Nation. One of these relationships includes Ramona Kitto Stately, project director of the Native nonprofit We Are Still Here Minnesota, and her son Reuben Kitto, a young Native rapper. This workshop will be a richly detailed Annual Session offering of building Native American intergenerational relationships.

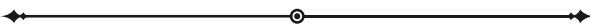


Photo: Travis DuPriest

Resurrection

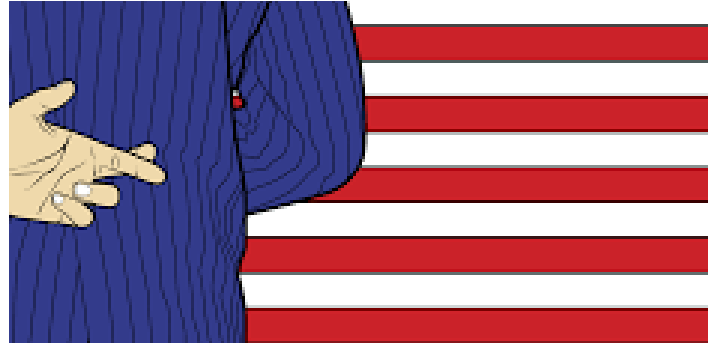
*Travis DuPriest
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group*

This is not a matter of choice, nor a matter of belief: it's a matter of fact: You were formed of the same atoms as father Adam and mother Eve. You were there breathing in the air of paradise. You were there with Job railing against God. You were there with the wandering Israelites when they abandoned Moses. You were there on the Sacred Path when there was no each, only all:

Ashes to ashes, dust into dust,
dust into air, air into water,
rain into earth, blossom into
fruit, fruit into flesh, flesh
into spirit: life everlasting.

Promises and Lies

*Michael Houle
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group*



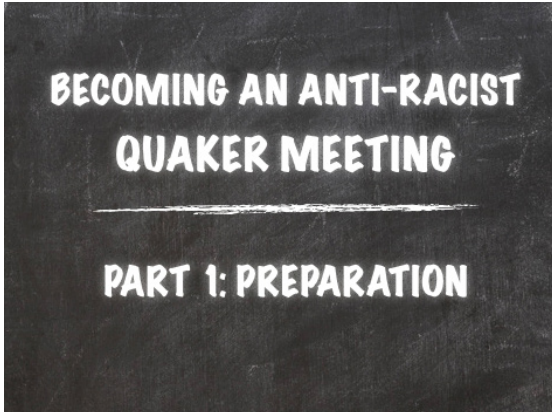
© 2018 MIT Sloan School of Management. Used with permission.

Stolen Land
Blood stained
Promises
 made of lies
Refuse floats
Skies turned yellow
Promises
 filled with lies
Soil toxic
Tainted seeds
Product planted by
 enslaved hands
Tobacco leaves strung
more valued than
the lynched figures
 swaying
Cotton with drops of blood
Woven into fashion
Polished leather warns
 Know your place
Independence
self-righteous arrogance
Ego centered whites
 kill at will
"All Men are Created
Equal"
if you are LIKE me
 Promises and Lies

Becoming an Anti-Racist Quaker Meeting

Carolyn Lejuste and David Etheridge

Challenging Racism



For over 400 years, our country and our Society has been burdened with the shame of slavery and systemic racism. Our Quaker ancestors were owners of Black bodies, abolitionists fighting the institution of slavery, segregationists, and civil rights activists. We have not been one or the other; we have been all. Today some of us are speaking out against racism, police violence against Black and brown bodies, and the systems that perpetuate economic, educational, and health inequalities. However, Friends have different understandings of how and where to stand up, speak up, and resist. Is it enough for one to believe they are not racist or is it imperative, as the author Ibram X. Kendi states in *How to be an Antiracist* that we actively work to end racism?

Our testimonies of integrity, equality, community, and peace guide our anti-racism actions. But our testimonies are understood in different ways by various Friends. What does it mean for Quakers to align themselves with People of Color who find it necessary to have an armed security force at their rallies, as they did recently on the steps of the Michigan Capitol? What does it mean to challenge Quaker traditions when they seem to work better for white Friends than for Friends of Color? What is the obligation implicit in the examination of white privilege and the lie of white supremacy to take specific action to change? Further, is this an individual obligation, a communal obligation, or both?

To be meaningful it is necessary for Monthly and Yearly Meetings to do the work of preparation before any Quaker body decides to take the long-practiced Quaker tradition of passing a minute to become an active anti-racist faith community. Here are eight ways to prepare Friends to enter discernment regarding such a minute.

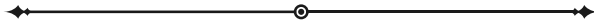
- Consider hiring an outside resource person to lead anti-racism workshops for the entire Meeting.
- Create book discussion groups using books by authors of color. QuakerBooks can order them for you.
- Hold monthly education conversations where Friends can learn and discuss the specifics of racism and how it works in our country.
- View and discuss films about race and racism. Notice the difference between films written and directed by white filmmakers and those written and directed by Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).
- Establish a working group to help Meeting lower existing racial barriers to involvement in the Meeting.
- Implement a Meeting-wide Inclusion Assessment. Seek and take seriously feedback from Friends of Color.
- Add information in the newsletter about activities from Friends of African Descent as well as FGC Ministry on Racism.
- Fund Friends to attend anti-racism conferences and workshops. Establish a space for these Friends to bring information back to Meeting.

The work of anti-racism can be costly in ego and in resources. It takes critical humility to look directly at the roots of racism and how we perpetuate it. It is spiritual work with which Quakers are most familiar. When we examine our lives and the life of our Meetings through the lens of our testimonies, our experience of the God within us grows and the beloved community thrives.

Carolyn Lejuste is a member of Red Cedar Friends Meeting in Lansing, MI. She served on FGC's Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism Task Force from 2016 to 2018 and served on the Institutional Assessment Implementation Committee from 2019 to 2020.

David Etheridge is a member of Friends Meeting of Washington in Washington, D.C. He serves on the Friends General Conference Institutional Assessment Implementation Committee.

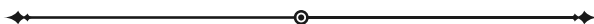
(Editor's Note: This first appeared in the November/December 2020 issue of *Vital Friends – A Resource for Quaker Faith and Life* published by the Friends General Conference.)



Wings

Robin Greenler
Madison Monthly Friends Meeting

Warming rays slant on drowsy cheeks
nudging us into consciousness.
I reach for the phone, the bubble bursts.
Text in: she is passing, it is Covid.
The pandemic landscape crashes in.
The daughters and granddaughters,
sons and fathers will gather
only in grief, across miles.
Outside that morning light catches
unfurling leaves, primed to spend their lives
transposing sun into seeds that twirl
airborne in a dazzling show of engineering.
Samaras that will be stowed
by squirrels who understand
about cycles of plentitude and hunger,
who are not fooled by the beneficence of spring.
That maple too, knows of cycles
as her showers of spinning seeds
betting fully on a future
with abandon.
In this new world, I pray we stay ordered:
to release the elders in their time
and pour love into offspring,
whose roots will hold through grief
and wings will dazzle when it is time.



Minute Supporting H.R. 40 Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act

South Seattle Friends Meeting (SSFM) approved this Minute Supporting H.R. 40 creating a commission to develop reparation proposals. It was brought forward by the SSFM Uprooting Racism Committee.

We believe that discovering the whole truth about our historical inequities is not only beneficial but essential if we are to fully understand the past and present and move forward as a nation.

The legacy of slavery continues to define and shape life in America. In 1619 Africans were brought as slaves to the coast of Virginia and during the following 250 years approximately 4 million Africans and their descendants were systematically denied their rights, culture, language and ability to benefit from their own labor. Even after slavery ended, exploitation, brutality and unfair treatment continue in the form of Jim Crow laws, lynching, separate and unequal practices, unfair housing and home-loan policies, inequities in education and health care, mass incarceration and more. Many of these practices continue today. Generation after generation of Black Americans have been deprived of the opportunity to accumulate wealth due to governmental policies and laws, even as they contributed substantially and indispensably to the nation's prosperity.

We support bill H.R. 40 which establishes a commission to examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. We believe that the establishment of this commission is a good first step in encouraging a national reckoning and determining appropriate remedies. This Bill has been introduced every year since 1989 and has yet to move forward for consideration.

We fully support passage of H.R. 40. We urge other monthly meetings as well as Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting and North Pacific Yearly Meeting to join with us in approving this minute and work on ways to support H.R. 40.

**Introduced in House on January 4, 2021
H.R. 40: Commission to Study and Develop
Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act**

“To address the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and the 13 American colonies between 1619 and 1865 and to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery, its subsequent de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African Americans, and the impact of these forces on living African Americans, to make recommendations to the Congress on appropriate remedies, and for other purposes.”

This bill establishes the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans. The commission shall examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. Among other requirements, the commission shall identify (1) the role of the federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, (2) forms of discrimination in the public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and (3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African-Americans and society.

(Editor's Note: For more information about H.R.40 and its status in Congress see:
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house>)

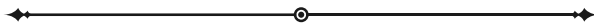


Photo: Vicki Berenson

Sea of Brilliance

Vicki Berenson
Madison Friends Monthly Meeting

*(Inspired by a January 2021
AFSC Interrupting Racism workshop)*

On a glorious winter day
I glide along in a sea of white
on tracks that are made for me.
Unquestioned, I belong.

I move smoothly
expecting fully to reach my destination
relatively unscathed.

I am white on white.
I am privileged.
I am invisible.

My ancestors were white and privileged
for a while
until they weren't.

No longer white and invisible,
they were scapegoated and annihilated
except for the ones
allowed to escape to this country
so a new generation could arise -
just a few, not enough to threaten the status quo.

Here we are allowed to be white (for now).
Many of us have thrived helped by reparations
and of course the color of our skin.

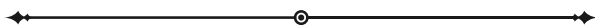
I continue to glide along these tracks
knowing that should I fall
there will be a
soft layer of snow
to cushion me.

My reverie is interrupted by the flight
of fighter jets overhead
and I am reminded that this country
that affords me privilege
also divides and destroys.

Who are those privileged people
who command the destruction and division?
Have they no conscience?
Or are they invisible to themselves,
so they cannot see?

How can I not be complicit?

I want to help groom a new track
on a sea of brilliance
wide enough and constructed for
every color
every size
every age
every one
to travel with the ease that I have found,
to reach their chosen destination
not only relatively unscathed
but joyful and fulfilled.



Shall We Gather?

Barbara Dixson
Stevens Point Friends Monthly Meeting



Photo: Northern Yearly Meeting

“The beautiful, the beautiful river.”* These words drifted into my thoughts this morning as the rising sun sparked lightsicles toward me off the frozen Wisconsin. That phrase tugged the rest of the lyrics into memory: “Yes, we’ll gather at the river, / The beautiful, the beautiful river; / Gather with the saints at the river, / That flows by the throne of God.” (3-4) And the words brought the melody, and the melody brought a full-body flashback to Nightingales, where I first sang that song. I was awash in longing.

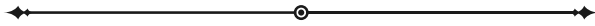
Sad longing: I will never again hear Barbara Greenler’s strong voice sing out. I will not see Dorothy Ackerman strap on her belly dance bells and dance in meeting.

Nostalgic longing: my teenaged children won’t come bleary-eyed from the Sunday evening high school group all-nighter (they are in their thirties now). A younger me won’t be up at dawn to run the lake loop before clerks’ team meeting. My pre-school granddaughter won’t chat excitedly about the art project she’s carrying out of her classroom (she’ll be 16 by the time we meet in person once again).

Most of all, though, radiant longing. After this time of being images on screens to each other, we will gather once more in spirit, mind, and body, with hugs,

walks, singing, talk, and silence humming among us. Will business meeting take place against a backdrop of ultimate Frisbee? Will eagles circle the lake? Will Friends from Africa and El Salvador lead us in song? Old friends, memories of friends not present, new friends, changed some, the same some: what a joy it will be to rediscover our gathered community!

**"Beautiful River" was written by American poet and gospel music composer Robert Lowry in 1864.*



Can One Be Saved in a Quaker Meeting?

Stephen Snyder
Minneapolis Friends Monthly Meeting

At a Quaker Quest gathering where our Meeting explored outreach to the community, one person asked, "What do we do if someone comes to Friends Meeting and wants to be saved?" What I heard in this question, perhaps mistakenly, was that such persons might want to seek out another faith community. Words like sin, redemption and salvation are not widely used among unprogrammed Friends today. However, they are part of our Christian heritage from early Friends. So, the question I would like us to consider is what Friends today might have to offer a seeker of salvation or liberation.

I should say that there was a time when I would flee with panic when I heard the traditional language of salvation being preached. However, I have learned to listen with the inner ear and have been able to let go of at least some of my prejudices around this language

In considering whether one can experience salvation at Friends meeting, I would like to share briefly my thoughts around three questions.

- What does it mean to be saved?
- For what purpose are we to be saved?
- From what are we saved and how are we transformed?

I will begin with my understanding of Salvation at this point in my spiritual journey.

For me, salvation, or spiritual transformation, is essentially the lifelong process of being brought into

communion or unity with the Divine Source—the Light Within; the Eternal and Living Christ—and to let this Light more and more be our Guide in life.

- It is to open and be present to that which is deepest within us, that something at the heart of things that cares deeply
- It is to have a tendered heart
- It is to become more whole psychologically
- It is to have hope and live a life of hope
- It is to be present to the miracle and beauty of the creation
- It is to come into a place of peace and serenity where we are held by eternity

If this is what it means to be saved, it sounds rather wonderful to me. This list could be considered goals in and of themselves, but in the Christian and Quaker tradition, being brought into communion with the Light Within was just the starting point for our work in the world. So, the second question I would like to consider is...

For what purposes are we to be saved?

I think the answer is found in the theme of the 2012 Friends World Gathering in Kenya: "Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom of God in a Broken World." This theme came from the Gospel of Matthew.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (*English Standard Version Bible, 2001, Matt. 13-16*)

George Fox put it this way:

"This is. . . a charge to you all in the presence of the living God; be patterns, be examples in all countries,

places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that **your life and conduct** may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you...” (Emphasis added) (*This statement comes in George Fox’s letter to ministers, which he sent in 1656 when he was in prison in Launceston in Cornwall. Ann Downer (1624–1686), who had walked from London to help him, wrote it down for him. Later she was a very influential Friend in the women’s meetings in London.*)

Like Fox, I believe we are called as individuals and Friends to let our lives witness to the presence of the Light within us and in our meeting community. We are to use the gifts God has given us—physical, cognitive and spiritual—to do the work of healing and reconciliation in the world. To see the world, our neighbors, ourselves, our enemies with God’s eye, the Inner Eye of Love. To see our **unity** with all the creation and not just our differences. To **live** the kingdom in a broken world and invite and **include** others in the beloved community.

In addition, I have come to realize that it is not Stephen who can do all this. I can only be a pattern and example to the extent I have opened myself to the Light Within and allowed it transform and work through me. If I speak in meeting or work in the world without a heart tendered by love, then I risk being just a noisy gong or clanging symbol, to use the words of Paul in First Corinthians. (*English Standard Version Bible, 2001, 1 Cor. 13:1*)

Finally, I would like to consider the question: From what do we need to be saved and how does this transformation occur?

Very simply I think we need to be saved from those parts of ourselves, the thorns, which choke off and separate us from the Seed Within. We need to be freed from our attachments (to use a Buddhist concept), our pride and self-absorption, our fears and insecurities, our masks and defensive walls, our resentments and prejudices, our despair, greed, envy, laziness, lusts or as Christians say, our sins. When I was young, I just

thought of sins as a list of bad things like stealing, lying, envy, greed, etc. Gradually, I am learning how these behaviors or attitudes make me the center of life leaving little room for loving God or others.

So how do we escape from the prison of self-absorption?

In my experience, as we are troubled and open ourselves to the Light, it searches us and reveals the **shadows** in our lives that **choke off** fuller communion. Friends used to say that the Light “convicts” us, making us aware of where we need to change. This Light may speak to us from within or be revealed to us through the scriptures, other spiritual writings or just the kindness of other loving Friends. Some might call this love or grace at work in our lives.

Once we are aware of places where we need to change, it is up to us to take the first step, to turn from those things that separate us from fuller communion with the Divine in others and in ourselves. This “being convicted” and “turning” is the process of conversion, in my experience. I think this is the meaning behind the song, “Simple Gifts”-- Every day, throughout our life, turning, turning until we come ’round right. (Brackett, Jr., J. (1848) Simple Gifts) (*A church elder of the Shaker community in Alfred, Maine wrote the words and music in 1848. The Shakers actually did not classify “Simple Gifts” as a hymn but rather as a dance song that they sang and danced to in their worship ritual.*)

I find Thomas R. Kelly beautifully captures the essence of my experience in this passage from his writings in *A Testament of Devotion*. Read it slowly, holding each phrase and sentence, and you will see the core of Friend’s faith and practice.

“Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continually return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself.

Continued on page 12



Northern Yearly Meeting

c/o Madison Friends Meeting

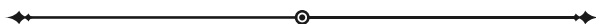
1704 Roberts Ct

Madison, WI, 53711-2029

“Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us.

“It is a Light Within that illuminates the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the human face.

“It is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He [this life] is within us all.” (Kelly, 1941)



Upcoming Dates

- NYM Annual Session: Virtual Session – May 28-31, 2021
- Friends General Conference (FGC) The Gathering: June 27-July 3, 2021
- Next NYM Journal Submission Deadline: July 23, 2021