

Quakers of Orlando

Quaker Commons

Volume 2011, Issue 4

April/Fourth Month



Clerk: Bill Carlie

Committees/Groups and Contacts:

Ministry and Clearness
Stephanie Preston

Peace and Social Concerns
Nelson Betancourt

First Day School
Judy Schmalstig

Finance
Dean Engstrom

Property
Dean Engstrom

Hospitality
Vicki Carlie

Calendar for the Month

April 3, 10, 17, 24
Meeting for Worship 10am

April 3, 17, 24
Conversation to Explore

April 9
Meeting for Healing 11am

April 10
Meeting for Business 11:30

Remember: Lunch Bunch gets together after each Meeting for Worship

Contributors to This Issue

Dean Engstrom
Liz Jenkins
Mary Ellen Meagher

Thank You!

FGC Gathering 2011

The Friends General Conference (FGC) will hold the 2011 Gathering at Grinnell College in Iowa on July 3 through 9. Themed "Meeting at the Center," this event will feature a week of worship, talks, workshops, field trips, films, singing, gatherings and child and young adult activities.

Events at the Conference include:

Morning Bible explorations.

Creative arts experiences in hymns, noon singalongs, and folk dancing.

Performance artist Evalyn Parry will comment through word and song on current events and issues on Wednesday, July 6 at 7pm.

Organized groups will form programs for shared experiences. Some of these groups include Friends of Color, Jewish and Nontheist Friends, Twelve Step, groups of various sexual identities, and Jewish Friends.

FGC information is available at the meeting house.

Speakers:

John Calvi will speak on torture, America, and democracy. His talk "To Go Where There Is No Light" is informed by twenty years of work with victims of torture as the founder of the Quaker Initiative to End Torture. He will speak the night of Monday July 4.

Winona LaDuke, a former Green Party vice-presidential candidate, will speak on the evening of Thursday, July 7. Informed by her American Indian heritage and life on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota, she will speak to sustaining the Earth and our connection with it.

Bruce Birchard, the General Secretary of the FGC since 1992 who is retiring after the 2011 Gathering, will speak on the central theme this year: "Meeting at the Center: Living Love and Reconciling One to Another" with a focus on sharing, empathy and seeking reconciliation in life.

Announcement

Intergenerational Art Show and Tell

At the Quaker Meeting House on Sunday, May 1, at 11:30am (after worship) there will be an Art Show and Tell.

Bring a personal piece of Art. For this event, Art is defined to include anything that is meaningful to you—pictures, sculpture, jewelry, fabric,

craft items, even stuffed animals. Nothing live, please.

Prepare to show the piece and tell about it. Nothing is for sale. This is not a fund raiser. This is a FUN raiser.

Please wear a tie. Your tie is your badge of participation.

Digital Quaker Collection

at Earlham School of Religion (from the DQC web page)

<http://esr.earlham.edu/dqc/>

The Digital Quaker Collection (DQC) is a digital library containing full text and page images of over 500 individual Quaker works from the 17th and 18th centuries. The proprietary software developed for Earlham School of Religion provides multiple search functions and an interface for viewing pages.

CHOICE March 05: Vol 42, No. 7
(American Library Association)

The Earlham School of Religion, a graduate theological school for the Society of Friends (Quakers), has provided access to a wealth of journals, letters, and monographs at

this site. The selected documents detail Quaker theology, spirituality, history, and practice since the inception of the religion in the mid-17th century. Earlham's purpose in providing access to these texts is to support Quaker scholarship for its distance education students and to provide a resource for local congregations. The resulting collection from a variety of Quaker authors consists of over 500 volumes considered to be in the public domain. Prominent Quaker figures such as George Fox and William Penn are well represented, but the collection also includes numerous authors of lesser prominence. Each text was scanned and encoded in XML, which allows

the scholar to view individual volumes in their original format with original spelling. Additionally, texts are available in a plain-text format. Users can browse the collection by author or title, but the real value stems from the availability of outstanding search capabilities. Scholars are able to search using Boolean or proximity operators, the index, and biblical references. Each search can be limited by place of publication, date, author, or gender of author. This major contribution to Quaker scholarship is a must for all levels of researchers. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers; general readers.

Quaker Tapestry: "George Fox's Convincement" by Mary Ellen Meagher

George Fox (1624 - 1691) was an English Dissenter and a founder of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers or Friends. He was the son of a weaver from Fenny Drayton, Leicestershire, in rural England, and was apprenticed to a shoemaker. He lived in a time of great social upheaval and war.

It was in 1647 that Fox first began to preach publicly, e.g. on hillsides, and in the fields; he had a vision of a great people to be gathered in the power of the Lord. His personality, powerful preaching, ministry and great pastoral gifts drew many into an enduring fellowship. At first, the fellowship called themselves "Children of the Light" or "Friends

of the Truth", and later simply "Friends".

Fox had been shocked by the failure of professing Christians to live up to the standards they proclaimed, and he rebelled against the religious and political authorities by proposing an unusual and uncompro-

mising approach to the Christian faith. He traveled throughout Britain as a dissenting preacher. In his view, as God was everywhere and anyone could preach, the established church was unnecessary and a university qualification not needed for a preacher. Fox's conflict with civil authority was inevitable, and he was often persecuted by the authorities who disapproved of his beliefs. Both he and his wife, Margaret Fell, suffered imprisonment over time.

The panel can be viewed at: <http://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk/about-the-tapestry/photo-gallery/>

Image to left copyright The Quaker Tapestry Scheme.



“Whither Quakerism?” Transcript Continued

2011 SEYM Michener Lecture (part 2)

Today we acknowledge that there are many authentic paths to God, including some not calling themselves Christian at all. There is also in the words of the 1660 Declaration a sense that the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God was only a matter of weeks or months away, and that Friends were living in a suspenseful anticipation of that event. You and I must deal with the lived experience that 350 years have now passed and the Kingdom still has not arrived in its fullness. Friends in 1660 were a legally persecuted minority group struggling for existence under an unfriendly monarchy; today we are an officially tolerated group legally entitled to full participation in the ruling democracy.

For some readers, the most unexpected thing about the Declaration of 1660 is that it is not an anti-war statement. It is an attempt to clear Quakers of suspicion of being terrorist bombers by showing that Quakers, as true Christians, have put away outward weapons and the desire for worldly power. The Declaration says clearly that war is OK for governments, who should wield the sword against "sinners and transgressors, to keep them down". War is not acceptable for true Christians (i.e., Quakers), who have put away the sword at Christ's command. Most Friends today understand our peace testimony as anti-war altogether: all violence is wrong even when it is government-sanctioned or a direct government action. This was not the testimony of Friends in 1660

As the Declaration demonstrates, the question before us is not

whether Quakerism should change. It has changed already, and it must continue to change. Even if I could understand George Fox's beliefs as he understood them, to say that I will believe and act only as George Fox believed and acted in the 1660s is to embrace a faith no longer relevant to the circumstances of our lives in the 21st century. More importantly, it would be to deny a formational part of the Quaker experience—that the Holy Spirit is continually revealing more and more about God and our relationship to God, including God's will for us individually and corporately, so that we might live more fully in God's kingdom, and invite others to join us there.

Here is a central paradox of Quakerism: the one thing which does not change is the experience of the continuing direct and perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit. Yet this unchanging guidance provides both impetus and direction for continuing change in almost every other aspect of Quaker faith and practice. It is the unchanging that ensures our faith is continually changing. To illuminate this point, let's take a fresh look at the experiences of George Fox in the months and years leading up to the beginning of the Religious Society of Friends.

Understanding George Fox requires that we try to understand what spiritual question he was asking—and here again we find the world has changed dramatically since he began his journey of seeking Truth. The great North American religious question in our lifetimes has been "What must I do to be saved"—or

in its Protestant version, "What must I believe to be saved?" That was not the question that confounded George Fox—he was asking something quite different.

In a Friends Journal article some years ago, Leigh Tucker recounted Henry Cadbury's comment about this. While Henry Cadbury was in London doing research in the Friends House library, a young doctoral student approached to ask him how a typical early Friend would have known he was saved. What did the early Quakers think was necessary for their own salvation? After considering the question, Henry Cadbury shook his head and replied, "I doubt if they thought much about it." In other words, Friends were not focused on their state of salvation but on how to live acceptably to God in the broken world which surrounded them.

Fox's problem was not that his questions about the right way to live had no answers—it was that there were too many answers. In his travels and inquiries he gathered a multitude of answers, including smoking tobacco, getting married and singing psalms. The question George Fox ended up with, after many attempts to get satisfaction, was "How can I know which answer is true?" All the rationales and authorities he had been given in support of particular answers rang false to his ears. All his efforts seemed only to eliminate possible ways of knowing: he felt no confidence in the advice of those who professed to be Christian teachers, of human churches and their doctrines, or of older and presume-

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“Whither Quakerism?” 2011 SEYM Michener Lecture

Continued from page 3

ably wiser men. Even the Scripture was closed to him during this time. He was in an epistemological crisis: "How do we know what we know?"

The answer which ended this crisis was that God knew the answers to all his questions, and God would teach George (or anyone who was willing) personally and directly: There was one who understood and could speak to George's condition—Christ—and that same Christ had come to teach all his people himself.

Christ had come...For some people, that is a word to set one's teeth on edge. I know—for years before and even after I became a Quaker, I was one of those people. If you are, too,

this is an opportunity to practice some spiritual hospitality: to hear George Fox in his own vocabulary, the words that had most meaning to him. While doing that, remember that Christianity is a big tent, and what George and early Friends meant by Christ is not necessarily the same as what the televangelist on cable TV means or what the creeds of the institutional churches say. In my understanding of Fox, the word Christ is here a pointer, and it points toward God, not toward the many meanings and connotations that Christ has gathered over the past couple of thousand years. Unlike most Christians, Friends have never been Trinitar-

ians—we've never tried to figure out and write down just how God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are related to one another, or which part has what responsibilities or powers. As Fox himself often pointed out, the word Trinity does not appear in Scripture. So let the word Christ serve as a pointer toward God in Fox's remarkable epiphany that Christ has come to teach his people himself.

This is the second installment of a serialization of Lloyd Lee Wilson's Michener Lecture, following the March initial installment. The rest will appear in following issues.

Pinwheels for Prevention

You may have noticed the blue and silver pinwheels in front of the Meeting House during the month of April. The pinwheels are part of both Florida Children's Week (April 3 - 8) and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

In light of the high incidence of child abuse and neglect in Orange County, several agencies have come together to address this issue through the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign designed to start conversations and remind the community of the need for prevention of child abuse and neglect. The pinwheels were pro-



vided by the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County. The accompanying flier reads: "Kids Are Our Business... Investing in healthy child development leads to a healthy economy. We support activities that provide children in our community with the healthy, safe and nurturing experiences they need for optimal growth and development."

They invite us as a Meeting to reach out to our community to support parents and encourage our community to give all our children a helpful, rather than a hurtful, start in life.

Reminder

Lunch Bunch

Everyone is warmly invited to join "Lunch Bunch" after our Conversation to Explore each First Day. We go to local restaurants that feature menus that include many vegetarian choices. We often continue the conversation, but also touch on many other topics. Old timers and first timers all enjoy the fellowship and a chance to deepen friendships.

Here we are at one of our favorite destinations - Viet Garden.

