

SPOKANEWORD

October

Tenth Month

2017



Spokane Friends

1612 W Dalke

Spokane, WA 99205

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Sunday Schedule:

Doors Open at 9:00 a.m.
Worship begins in stillness
when first person sits down.

Worship continues with
song and messages

10:00 am

Fellowship

11:00 am

Third Sunday of the Month:

Third Sunday is same
schedule with the addition
of Monthly Meeting at rise
of worship, followed by
a potluck meal.

Up on a Rooftop

by Steven Schweitzer

From the very beginning, individuals gathered together to read the Bible and apply it to their lives in practical ways. The Gospels and the letters of the New Testament demonstrate how these early Christians tried to make sense of their newfound faith and its practical implications for living with others, within both the church and the wider world. While some things seem rather straightforward, others are more complicated. Even 2 Peter 3:15-16 bluntly states that some things in Paul's letters are "hard to understand."

We recognize that the Bible requires interpretation. Most of us read it in translation (English, Spanish, or some other modern language) rather than in its original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. There is always interpretation in moving from one language to another.

Even if we read it in the original languages, we must make interpretive decisions about the meaning of words and concepts from the ancient setting into our own. All translation is interpretation. Whether the languages are ancient or modern, as readers of God's Word we are constantly interpreting as we move from ancient texts written millennia ago to individuals and communities in very different cultural contexts than our own. How can we successfully bridge this gap between us and them, so that we may follow Jesus faithfully?

There are a number of productive approaches that we may use, and I want to highlight a few, beginning with an example from Deuteronomy.

"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have bloodguilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it" (Deuteronomy 22:8).

This verse is part of a larger section of miscellaneous laws in Deuteronomy 21-22 covering issues of stray domesticated livestock, clothing, crops, and sexual relationships. This section cannot simply be ignored by Christians, as is often done with regulations in the law involving animal sacrifice, ritual, or ceremony (understood in the New Testament to be unnecessary now in light of Christ's death) and its restrictions about food laws (understood to be no longer binding on Christians according to several New Testament passages). There is no overt reason to dismiss this law as irrelevant. So, how should we understand it?

First, we should try to understand the words being used in the verse itself. The Hebrew word *ma'akeh* is translated here as "parapet" (NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV), "railing," (NLT), and "battlement" (KJV). It comes from a Hebrew root meaning "pressure" and this is the only place the word is used in the Old Testament.

So, a good first question after consulting multiple translations and a Hebrew dictionary: "What is a parapet?" Wikipedia states: "A parapet is a barrier which is an extension of the wall at the edge of a roof, terrace, balcony, walkway or other structure." Dictionary.com states: "any low protective wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, roof, bridge, or the like."

The second question: "So, why do I need one on my roof, especially since no one is ever up there?" The answer comes from ancient Israelite architecture: Homes were constructed with flat roofs that were covered by a canopy intended as extra living space (see Judges 16:27; 2 Samuel 11:2, 16:22; Acts 10:9), especially with the first floor of the house including space for animals. This wall prevented someone from falling off the flat usable space, and thereby being injured or killed when hitting the ground below. This design was common throughout ancient Near East cultures.

This historical and cultural knowledge reveals a humanitarian principle: People must maintain their property in such a way as to prevent someone else from getting hurt. In our contemporary society, many communities have a similar ordinance requiring swimming pools to be surrounded by a fence to prevent accidental drowning. However, at least in North America, we do not have stipulations requiring parapets or short walls on rooftops. Why? Because we don't typically have flat roofs used in this way. Our culture and biblical culture are not the same when it comes to architecture.

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do not have stipulations requiring parapets or short walls on rooftops. Why? Because we don't typically have flat roofs used in this way. Our culture and biblical culture are not the same when it comes to architecture.

A third question: "Should Christians observe this command?" Or put directly, "Should Christians build parapets on their roofs?" I would say "no." This command about parapets is a culturally conditioned regulation.

However, the reason for the law is worth pondering: humanitarian concern for another's well-being (or, their *shalom*). So, if we are to be faithful to this command, we shouldn't build a parapet on our roofs (simply doing what the text seems to require, and rather clearly). Instead, the command requires us to live in ways that promote the well-being of others or work against their harm. This is also consistent with the commands to assist wandering livestock to prevent them from being hurt in preceding verses (Deuteronomy 22:1-4).

The command is culturally specific, but the principle is timeless. Our responsibility to be aware of how our actions and lives affect others is also consistent with Jesus' teachings. The principle behind this seemingly mundane command fits well with the actions and teachings of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. . . Who would have thought that architecture could be theological?

This example from Deuteronomy illustrates several of the productive means of interpreting the Bible.

First, we *read the text*, taking seriously what it says and trying to understand the actual words being used. We *identified terms in the text we did not understand or might want to understand more fully*, especially as it might affect how we interpret the command. We looked at definitions and occurrences in other parts of the Old Testament and used comparative evidence from other cultures to give ourselves some context.

Second, in addition to linguistics, we looked to *historical context* (architecture in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East) for additional information. We noted some instances in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) that reflect a similar understanding (that is, people using flat roofs).

Third, we noticed the *literary context* of this verse, placing it within a larger set of laws on various topics and recognizing the similarity in purpose to some of them. Both the historical and the literary contexts allowed us to see a *larger principle* at work beyond the specific command.

Fourth, we looked for *connections to other parts of scripture*, particularly the life and teachings of Jesus, that might aid us in interpretation. With all these things in mind, we made *theological claims* about this command, about how it both is and is not relevant for Christians, especially those living in places without flat roofs, such as North America today. We concluded that the principle behind the stipulation transcends this specific manifestation.

This is a simple (and not controversial, I hope) example, but it illustrates many of the approaches to interpretation that we may use productively in attempting to understand more difficult or controversial topics and texts. Situating the biblical text in its ancient context, both historical and literary, is extremely beneficial in helping to understand its meaning for its ancient audience and also for contemporary readers. . .

When we encounter things in the Bible that we do not fully comprehend or that pose questions, we should engage in the hard work of trying to make sense of such complexities or ambiguities and to answer the questions being raised. We must not shy away from asking hard questions of the Bible and of our faith. We should also not be afraid of the answers that we find, even when they challenge our preconceived ideas and require us to adapt to new information discovered as a result of the good work of interpretation. This does not change the Bible, but it changes our understanding of it, and in the process we may be transformed. . . . As we practice biblical interpretation together, I hope that we may be drawn closer to God and to one another rather than farther apart.

Steven Schweitzer is academic dean and professor at Bethany Theological Seminary.

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Letters to the Editor

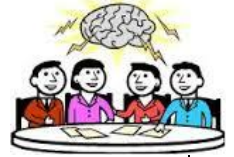
(Practicing Civil Discourse)

Love us? Hate us? Got something you need to get off your chest? The material printed in **SPOKANESWORD** represents the choice of the Editor and not the opinion of Spokane Friends Meeting (Quakers often disagree on many matters). So we would like to have a new section called "Letters to the Editor" for those who would like to comment on any aspect of what is printed in these pages. Let **YOUR** voice be shared here also!

Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q
Q Been attending Spokane Friends for long enough Q
Q to become curious about Quakers? Think you Q
Q might be a Quaker? If so, please talk to one of Q
Q the Elders (Lois K., Norman P., Wade S., Bob W.) Q
Q who will be able to answer questions and help you Q
Q begin the process of becoming recorded as a Q
Q member of Spokane Friends. Q
Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q Q

MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

September 17, 2017



The meeting was opened by Clerk Jonas Cox with 11 in attendance. The Minutes for August were read and approved with two corrections: (1) Instead of using just any room downstairs, we would like Caritas to use the smallest room, and (2) The word "tithes" should be changed to "tithes and offerings".

Treasurer's Report: Wade Schwartz reports that he is able to follow more of a budget because of the increase in giving. Two payments made by Caritas had "stop payment". He will check with Caritas to see where the problem is. He has been able to put \$3,000 back into the Friends Foundation Fund. We are now back to where we were at the close of 2016.

Nominating Committee: Several have turned in their nomination sheets and the Committee will look at these and bring a slate of nominations to the Monthly Meeting for Business in October.

Peace with Justice: No specific report but participants are keeping in touch through emails and bulletin announcements

Stewards & Trustees: No report. The Stewards/Trustees are asked to come up with a policy statement regarding the use of the emergency funds at Spokane Friends Church.

Elders: An updated pulpit supply list is available in the bulletin. We are working on a letter to send to absent Friends, asking them whether they wish to remain on our membership list. The letter will suggest ways they can support us. Jon and Krista Maroni have asked that they be recorded as members of Spokane Friends Church; this was heartily approved. A list was handed out showing the recipients of monies from the Gideon Meals. People were asked to mark on the sheet which ministries they would like to keep and which to lay down. They can be returned to any Elder. They will be tallied and brought to the Monthly Meeting for action.

We would like to give thanks to Joyce Nelson and Becky Tsoumpas for their hard work organizing and preparing the Gideon Meals.

The Clerk admonished us to continue praying for the Lord's leading concerning whether we stay with NWYM, go with Sierra Cascades YM or be Independent. We need to determine the will of God regarding where we belong.

Lois Kieffaber asked if we wanted representation of Spokane Friends Meeting at the upcoming Sierra-Cascades meeting in Eugene? She may be traveling with Leann Williams. We asked that she convey that we would like their Faith and Practice to be non-creedal. We think Queries are more appropriate. We hope that "gender issues" will not be the main concern for this new Yearly Meeting.

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The meeting also asked our Secretary, Lois Kieffaber, to send emails, since our recent Yearly Meeting sessions regarding NWYM and Sierra Cascades YM, to all on the churches email list unless otherwise told by members or regular attendees.

With no further old or new business and all hearts clear, Anya Lawrence dismissed us with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

Fall Leadership Schedule

- Oct 1 Worship in the Manner of Friends
- Oct 8 Mary Anne Swenson-Vigil
- Oct 15 Jon Maroni
- Oct 22 Leann Williams
- Oct 29 George Murphy
- Nov 5 Lauri Clark-Strait
- Nov 12 Lois Kieffaber

News From Caritas

During the month of August 2017, Caritas Outreach Ministries served **655 individuals**:

Children (0-18)	318
Adults (18-54)	419
Seniors (55 & over)	267



We served **1004** households.

We distributed **13,541** of food through both our Bread Wall and our Food Bank. We had **50** volunteers putting in **501** hours.

Congratulations to Caritas Volunteers -- this is the first time that the number of households served is **over one thousand!** This is interesting information for those of us who thought that summer would bring a decrease in the number of families needing the services offered by Caritas.

- Since the departure of Lauri Clark-Strait, Operations Manager Kelsie Roland has taken on additional hours to keep these vital services afloat while the Board decides how to move forward in replacing Lauri. for April 8th.
 - Caritas will celebrate its **25th Anniversary** with a birthday party on Saturday, October 29, from 3 to 5 pm.
- Thanks to Board Member Amber Joplin for providing this information.

The Gideons are coming!



This Tuesday evening, October 1, our faithful Missions Committee Kitchen Team will be serving Mummy Dogs and Chili. The donation this month will go to Jonathan and Carol Williams. The sign-up sheet for our faithful helpers awaits you in the hospitality area. Note that we are requesting more food, as the attendance has increased.



WHO KNEW??

It seems that Becky Ankeny, the former General Superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting before resigning in June of last year, has written a pamphlet which is also available as an e-book which can be read online.



It is reviewed in this month's Friends Journal, available in the hospitality area. Here in an excerpt from the review by Mitchell Santine Gould:

It is noteworthy that this curious little book does not make overt references to Quakerism. For this reason, it is an interesting exercise to recognize implicitly, or between the lines, so many vital foundational principles of Quaker theology in it. To a naive eye, they may seem like innocuous commonplaces, but I can recognize them as restatements of dramatic and powerful arguments from the Hicksite schism, which led the Orthodox to react with horror over the "licentious" implications of freedom of conscience under the guidance of the Inner Light: The Friendly conviction that laws are meant to serve human dignity, and not the other way around (Mark 2:27; the reminder that the greatest law is the law of Brotherly Love of God and neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40); and of course, that central foundation of Quakerism, "the Light of the World" in human conscience (John 10:27; John 8:12).

I find it particularly striking that when Ankeny stresses the importance of not judging others (Matt. 7:1-3.), she add, "Our neighbors are responsible to God for their own relationships to God.: Hicks insisted on this point in 1824, asking his flock: "How Then shall we undertake to give a brother or a father a belief? If we do it, what wicked and presumptuous creatures we are, because we take the place of God ... Mind thy own business."

. . . In the end, the conclusion of Ankeny's valuable and thought-provoking contribution rings perfectly true with the values shared by every Friend. "The key is to be in personal relationship to God, when one listens to God and does what one hears God say."

The Crab Creek Wranglers are preparing for the Fall Folk Festival on November 11, where they will be entertaining on stage from 11:30 to noon. Sue Keehnen will also be participating in the Craft Show.



Current stories in Quaker News:

- Reedwood Friends Church was discontinued by NWYM Elders Sept. 1, 2017. Concurrently Reedwood pastors completed their service, receiving severance packages for Sept. through Dec. 2017.
- Newberg Friends has split into two congregations --Newberg Friends Church (staying with NWYM) and Newberg Friends Emerging Church (leaving NWYM).
- Newberg Friends Emerging Church has withdrawn from financial negotiations with Newberg Friends Church, saying "it was not a good faith negotiation" and the situation was "unjust".
- Twin Lakes Friends Camp faces ownership questions in light of the Yearly Meeting re-structure.

Read more about these stories at www.quakernews.com Quaker News is the work of Barclay Press, where we hold to two truths: 1) Sharing stories changes lives, and 2) Open, equal access to information improves our discernment. You can support the work of Quaker News with tax-deductible donations through Barclay Press.

IMPORTANT

At the September Business Meeting, it was decided that it would help educate members and attenders about the upcoming decision regarding Yearly Meeting membership if people had access to ongoing information about both Yearly Meeting options. The Office Assistant has been asked to forward pertinent information from both Yearly Meetings. You have received the first of such forwarded messages starting with July 2017, and we will work up to current mailings. **IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO RECEIVE THESE**, please let the Office know and your name will be removed from the list. You may also contact the office if you did **NOT RECEIVE THEM AND WANT TO**.

We will still attempt to share some of this news via this Newsletter.