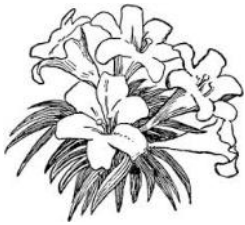


SPOKANEWORD

April

Fourth Month

2018



Spokane Friends

1612 W Dalke

Spokane, WA 99205

(509) 327-7852

www.spokanefriends.com



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**

**Second Sunday of the Month:
After worship we gather for a
Community Potluck Dinner .**

**Third Sunday of the Month:
Monthly Meeting for
Business begins at rise of
worship.**

Saving Isaac: Religion, War and the Lives of our Children

by John A. Minahan

So Abraham called the name of that place, "the LORD will provide." as it is said to this day. "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." — Genesis 22:14

So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide," as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." —Genesis 22:14 We're nearing the end of a four-year period marking the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. I'm only three generations removed from that war. My father's grandfather, brought from Ireland as an infant during the Great Famine, signed up to be in the Union Army when he was 15. He was a drummer boy. It is such a charming image, the willowy lad in his spanking new, blue uniform, sleeves perhaps just a bit too long, pounding away with all the earnest energy of youth. And yet it was an incredibly dangerous job, which is why it was a boy's job. Particular drumbeats carried over the noise of battle to communicate particular orders. If your drummer got killed, you lost your ability to maneuver coherently under fire, which meant you lost the battle. You'd want a small target, say a boy of 15.

Daniel, my great grandfather, served for almost a year. He was absent from one of the most horrendous battles, Antietam, because he had been on guard duty in Washington, D.C.—keeping watch, so family lore has it, on Belle Boyd, a notorious and beautiful Confederate spy not much older than he, who reached through the bars of her prison cell to nudge him awake. "Son," she said, "they shoot boys for doing that." Daniel was present, however, at another appalling battle: Fredericksburg, in December of 1862, where the Irish brigades did the bulk of the fighting and the dying. That night, an aurora borealis, unheard of that far south, spread across the Virginia sky. Both sides took the pulsing, electric green curtains high overhead as a sign that God was on their side.

No one ever goes to war without theology. Violence is natural, just as hunger is natural. As the famine that drove my ancestors to America was political, so war is the result of a culture's conscious choices about meaning and value. If you teach in a Friends school (as I do) and if your school has the teaching of nonviolence written into its mission statement (as mine does), then you might want to remind yourself (as I need to) that war is a profoundly meaningful and even sacramental experience, willfully chosen and willfully prepared for. Sitting in a classroom decrying the horror of combat is not only too easy, it also misses the point.

One of the most troubling effects of war is the belief we're forced to develop in its aftermath: that its suffering must not have been for nothing. This effect of war might also be one of its most insidious causes. Nothing as horrible as war can happen without us believing that it's for the sake of some great good—the greater, the better. Best of all is a good that can't be exhausted no matter how unspeakable the suffering—a good that reaches into the infinite. Call it God or the gods or Country or Liberty or even just our own sense of deserving to survive in the universe because we happen to be Us and not Them. Our suffering is thereby justified and is perhaps even (and here's the really troubling part) encouraged. That is, if this infinitely greater good is to be made manifest in this world, it requires of us the costliest sacrifice we can make: our willingness to send our children to die. Only then will we merit divine favor. All our smart bombs and high-tech armaments have done little to alter this ancient need to propitiate the Most High. If anything, our awesome powers of destruction have made us crave the idols of justification all the more. The Civil War, with its sophisticated weaponry, is often called the first modern war. And there in Fredericksburg, my great-grandfather's Union comrades believed God was with them, a comfort in their staggering loss; the Confederate troops that Daniel faced believed God was with them, a helpmate in their victory. The young who lost their lives were therefore "sacrificed," a word that literally means "made holy."

God said to Abraham, take your beloved son, Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice. Prove to me that you love your God even more than your own son. Isn't this the perfect metaphor for war? The old killing the young in the name of God. We do a remarkably good job of making that killing meaningful and even pretty: parades, uniforms, somber and prayerful ceremonies, drummer boys who are decorated for their service to the nation. On my desk before me right now is a
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The old killing the young in the name of God. We do a remarkably good job of making that killing meaningful and even pretty: parades, uniforms, somber and prayerful ceremonies, drummer boys who are decorated for their service to the nation. On my desk before me right now is a medal that my great-grandfather received, a brass star tarnished with age and dulled by handling, intricately etched with noble words and god-like figures, and pendant from a frayed stars-and-stripes ribbon. I treasure this medal, and I am profoundly grateful to this 15-year-old young man. I admire his courage, his love of his adopted country, and his willingness to give his life for the sake of others. Jesus says there is no greater love. I never want to forget how lucky I am to be here at all considering what Daniel risked, nor do I want to forget how lucky I am to live in a nation that gets to continue its great experiment in freedom because of sacrifices on the battlefield. But an aspect of the freedom he fought for was my freedom to make choices different from his.

Daniel went to war as a teenager; when I was a teenager, I marched into my draft board and announced that I wanted to register as a conscientious objector. This being shortly after the ceasefire in Vietnam, I was told that CO status was not an option at that time since there was, technically, nothing to object to. Nothing to object to? Saigon fell a few months later, and a small Asian country that 55,000 Americans died defending ceased to exist. Nothing to object to? War is so common in history that we might as well just go ahead and call it history. The students who sit in my classroom are the exception: children who are spared war. The rule is that young people do the fighting and the dying; that's why it's called the "infantry." Jesus may have held up the ideal of laying down one's own life for others, but he also told a story about a king who was getting ready to go to war; when the king saw that his enemy had many more troops, he decided to negotiate for peace. Jesus is making a point about commitment: you haven't done it until you know what it will cost you. But he's also making the same point about war: don't do it without knowing the cost. And the cost is always the lives of our children.

How does the story of Abraham and Isaac end? God stops him from killing his son. This is one reason I've never accepted the notion that Jesus died to save us from our sins, his own Father killing the Son for a divine purpose. My students and I were talking about these issues one day in a world religions class—my students, who are about the same age Daniel was when the aurora lit up the sky over Fredericksburg. One member of the class had a thought about the Isaac narrative that shows the critical thinking that can happen in the classroom of a Friends school. "Yes," my student said, "God is testing Abraham, but when Abraham says yes to God he fails the test. God gave him every opportunity to stop, right up to the moment the old man lifted his blade to strike. This test wasn't about proving his faith to God; this was about finding out for himself what faith should and should not do."

My student's hypothesis came with some scriptural authority. For one thing, our class noted that little good came from this test: Isaac's mother dies immediately afterward, and Isaac himself never seems to recover either physical or mental health. For another, our class remembered the passage earlier in Genesis where Abraham barter with God to save Sodom for the sake of ten good people, thus learning a lesson about compassion's power—and its limits. Why did Abraham not argue similarly for his son? Could it be that in a certain place in his soul where his faith was at its strongest, he wanted to make the sacrifice? It was not that he wanted to kill his son, rather that he wanted to show that his faith had no limit. But everything in human life is limited, including our understanding. So, maybe Abraham was supposed to say no. Maybe he was supposed to discover for himself, as he did when negotiating for Sodom, that he needed to think a little harder about what God really asks of those of us who claim to be faithful. The Lord directed Abraham to a ram caught in a thicket. In providing this other sacrifice, could the Lord be asking all of us to look harder when it comes to the lives of our children?

There's a brilliant sequence in the first movement of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, the one he wrote during the siege of Leningrad. As the lush and glorious opening section dies away, a lone snare drum quietly begins pounding out a quick military beat—the kind of thing Daniel would have played. A jaunty little tune comes in, and it's all lots of fun, suggesting parades and drills and waving flags and easy patriotism. As the tune is developed through a dozen variations, it turns by degrees into a chaotic, horrific, ultimately terrifying mass of sound. It's hard to believe that this violence all started with that one little figure on the drum. And yet, step by step, that's what happened. Could it have been otherwise? A final exhausted, ragged repetition of the marching tune at the end of the movement suggests so or at least asks where else this drumbeat might take us. We know what it has led to; what can it lead to?

I am grateful to my great-grandfather for making my life possible. My commitment to nonviolence in no way diminishes that gratitude. How do I live in such a way as to bear witness to that gratitude, both to him and to those who go to war today? I wish I had an easy answer. All I have is more questions. Where else can those drumbeats lead us? Where else but war can we get that profound meaningfulness? When we go up onto those high places where we are called to do the hardest things, will the Lord provide? I'm older now than Daniel was when he died, and the only wisdom I claim is the wisdom of waiting in expectant and hopeful silence. That's why I teach in a Friends school. It's a good place to listen, especially during a time of war. Sometimes, if I listen well enough, I hear a young person wonder if we need to say no to God now and then. If I listen even harder, I sometimes believe I hear Daniel's drum echoing in that refusal—a refusal that just might be the ultimate affirmation. Sometimes, if I listen even harder, I sometimes believe I hear Daniel's drum echoing in that refusal—a refusal that just might be the ultimate affirmation.

John A. Minahan has been a teacher for over 30 years, for the last 20 at Lincoln School in Provident, RI, where he teaches English, psychology, world religions, and Quaker studies. He has also been a professional musician and full-time father, and enjoys hiking in the woods of New England. This article was published in the August 2015 issue of *Friends Journal*. Our Meeting subscribes to *Friends Journal*; recent issues are in the hospitality area, older ones in the Library.

Congratulations, Churches Working Together!

When the people of God join together to advocate for the vulnerable in our society, wonderful things can happen. We received the report below from FAN about the work of the Washington State Legislature during their last session. Go to fanwa.org to learn more.

The 2018 sixty-day State Legislative session is now over, and right on time! This year stands in great contrast to last year, when it took three special sessions to reach a deal on the biennial budget. Much was accomplished; many bills passed which up until this year were held up in committees. There are also disappointments about bills that didn't make it, how money is allocated in the supplemental budget, and that new dollars are not raised. Here are some of the highlights of the session:

Victories in the Supplemental Budget

- **The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) monthly grant** was finally restored with \$7.5 million in the Supplemental Budget. We are now finally at the same funding level as before the Great Recession when program was severely cut.
- **Office of Civil Legal Aid** funding was granted to hire five full-time attorneys to strengthen the important anti-poverty work of this small state agency. The agency helps those who are struggling to get legal help.
- **Breakfast after the Bell** (HB 1508 Stonier) was funded at \$1.2 million, giving small grants to high-poverty schools to provide nutritional breakfast food in ways that will feed more kids.
- **The State Prison Ombuds Office** (HB 1889 Pettigrew) was granted \$1.2 million to be established within the Governor's Office. Its purpose is to promote the health and welfare of those serving time in our state prisons to help reduce litigation costs and make their re-entry more successful.
- **The Legal Defense Fund** received \$1 million to assist individuals and families to fight illegal deportation cases.

Key Policy Victories

- **WA Voting Rights Act** (SB 6002 Saldana): This structural and legal change will empower communities of color to have a greater ability to engage in the electoral process at the local level.
- **Prohibition of bump stock sales and possession** (SB 5995 Van De Wege): This bill will help prevent mass shootings like the Las Vegas massacre. It bans a device that lets semi-automatic weapons fire like automatic weapons.

Initiative 940 (HB 3003 Goodman): This amazing and miraculous negotiation means that the use of deadly force initiative (De-Escalate WA) will not have to engage in an expensive and bitterly-fought campaign battle between community groups and law enforcement. This law will reform our state's most egregious statute on the use of deadly force by law enforcement and will invest in more police de-escalation and mental health training.

• **Legal Financial Obligation reforms** (HB 1783 Holy): The 'debtor prison' system in our state has been halted, enabling those coming out of prison to be more successful in re-entry. Two major reforms are elimination of the 12% interest rate on court fees/fines and requiring judges to consider ability to pay when sentencing occurs.

• **Source of Income Discrimination** (HB 2578 Riccelli): Now landlords will not be allowed to discriminate on the basis of a renter's source of income. A landlord mitigation fund is also established to help resolve disputes between renters and landlords.

• **Document Recording Fee** (HB 1570 Macri) The fee was increased on real estate documents recorded at county offices. The fee is a critical funding source to reduce and prevent homelessness by funding services and access to housing.

Some Disappointments

- **A Repeal of the Death Penalty** (SB 6052 Walsh) passed through the Senate but was stalled before making it to the House floor.
- **Keep WA Working** (SB 5689 Wellman) would have created a legal separation on civil cases between ICE agents and local law enforcement. It did not pass out of the Senate.
- **Religious zoning for affordable housing** (HB 1987 McBride): This bill provides local zoning incentives to help faith communities build affordable housing on their property.
- **HB 2967 & 2437** would have closed the exemption on **capital gains**, reduced property tax, and provided counties the option to raise sales tax for affordable housing.
- **Improving security in schools and the safety of students** (SB 6620 Frockt) would have raised the purchase age to 21 for an assault rifle, established a background check for this purchase, and established a student alarm system.



MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

25 March 2018



The meeting was opened by Presiding Clerk Jonas Cox. 12 people were in attendance. The minutes of the January meeting were approved as read.

Elders: The Elders discussed the last four weeks of worship services. We have had good speakers. Plans were made for the visit of Dwight Kimberly to discuss the option of becoming an independent Meeting as well as the other two Yearly Meeting Options. We are working on the final draft of the letter to go to non-attenders and out-of-town members to determine their interest in continuing their affiliation with us. We would like to have some representation at the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions, which will occur May 18-20, before a decision is required about our own future affiliations. The meeting approved \$230 per person to attend. There are two or three who are interested in attending.

Treasurer's Report: We have had enough funds to pay for the basic expenses of the church. We were able to give Johan and Judy Maurer \$730 towards their ministry. We are going to request a finance report from NWYM.

Stewards & Trustees: No report.

Education: The Committee is still looking at options of books to use for a discussion group. They will bring these to the Elders.

Peace with Justice: No report.

New Business: We need to consider a time line for making a decision about our affiliation with either Yearly Meetings or becoming Independent. The first step is to register our Meeting as a 501(c)(3) non-profit. **[Editor's Note: A 501(c)(3) organization is a corporation, trust, unincorporated association, or other type of organization that is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code. It is the most common type of the 29 types of 501(c) nonprofit organizations in the United States and includes religious organizations.]**

We need to find a corporate attorney to help with this. Jon & Krista Maroni and Sue Keehnen will help with this process.

We still need to have a specific policy for the use of our Emergency Funds. The Meeting made three decisions to be used till the policy is created.

Action Items: (1) No cash would be given. (2) We will determine what the specific needs are, i.e., bills, gas, food. (3) Pam Emery and Lois Kieffaber will check out people requesting help to make sure the above conditions are met. They are authorized to give up to \$100 to meet a need at their discretion.

With no further business and with all hearts & minds clear, Pam Emery dismissed in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

The Healthy Church

- * People are constantly expressing disagreement and they do it right out in the open.
- * The pastor is always behind in his/her work.
- * The trustees can never seem to make ends meet financially, and they are forever giving money away.
- * New groups keep cropping up and bumping into each other over schedules and competing for volunteers.
- * A number of people miss meetings and insist on spending time with their families.
- * The choir is filled with a lot of amateurs.
- * The kids are noisy and all over the place, including the time of worship.
- * The hymnals are wearing out, the coffee hour is crowded and confusing, the building is in need of many repairs, the electric bill is way over budget, and it seems that an awful lot of people have keys and all kinds of groups are coming and going.
- * The place is full of losers; people who have lost their loved one, people who know they can't make it on their own, people who are losing but also finding their lives, receiving and giving a lot of love for Christ's sake.