

SPOKANENWORD

*February is
Quaker Month
2020*



Spokane Friends

1612 W Dalke

Spokane, WA 99205

(509) 327-7852

www.spokanefriends.com

spokanefriends@gmail.com

Sunday Schedule:

Unprogrammed Worship

9:00—9:45 am

Programmed Worship

10:00 am.

Fellowship 11:00 am

Third Sunday of the Month:

Monthly Meeting for

**Business begins at rise of
worship.**

"Groundhog Day"

by Paula Bowser



Well, you're probably out there wondering what a groundhog is doing in a nice place like this. If you're not much of a film buff, you might think that the 1993 movie is just another bit of Hollywood fluff that has no business coming to church. Even if you like the movies, you might mistake it for a chick flick – a romantic comedy – with a fantasy twist.

But if you know how to read this story, you'll understand that it's a parable about a person who has no soul, and who must die to himself in order to truly live. It's all about being born again, ... and again and again and again. And in case you hadn't noticed the heart and soul of the Christian faith is about embracing the cross and rising to a new life.

Harold Ramis, who made the film, said that after it was released he had letters from Buddhists, Rabbis, Jesuits and Ministers – and every one of them said it was a film about their religion. It's probably at heart more of a Buddhist parable, with overtones of reincarnation and billions of chances to get it right.

Groundhog Day is a parable about enlightenment. The unexamined life is lived in total darkness. Yet, if we live in the Spirit, every day brings a bit of enlightenment which can transform our darkness into the marvelous light of the Christ.

As Bob Dylan once said, "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

Weatherman Phil Connors is a blowhard and a perfect storm. He's just what he appears to be on the surface, and the scary part is he's us. He doesn't kill anyone or engage in any spectacular wickedness, but I can't help thinking that Calvin would say he's utterly depraved. See, Phil sits at the center of his own world and there he reigns supreme. He's his own little god. He's interested in his own advancement, his own comfort and his own glory. Self-gratification is his only aim in life.

He's nasty too. Phil is like one of those cartoon characters who carries his own little rainstorm with him wherever he goes. He's sarcastic and grumpy and has no qualms about insulting or humiliating others. No one likes Phil.....Not even Phil. He's nice only when it will reap tangible rewards... like getting a young woman to come to bed with him. He would never commit himself to a woman, though. He's strictly love 'em and leave 'em. It's hard to tell which is the bigger rodent.... the Groundhog Phil or Phil Connors.

His one redeeming characteristic is a great sense of humor. Otherwise, he's a walking depression. If you hang out with Phil, you can expect low temperatures and murky clouds. Chance of rain? 100%. Smart people will get out of his way. So Phil has no real friends. But he doesn't know this until he's forced to relive the worst day of his life.

See, Phil's thinks he's too important to go out to Punxsutawney and cover a silly story like Groundhog Day. For him, it's just a meaningless grind. He's just like the cynical Preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes. He's bored into a coma by life itself.

Well, Groundhog Day starts out bad and gets worse. He is accosted by an aggressive insurance salesman who turns out to be a human leech. He steps into a deep puddle of ice-water trying to escape this guy. The groundhog bit is a bore. A freak snowstorm arrives and he's forced to remain in Punxsutawney overnight. The day drags on and on.

He gets smacked in the head with a snow-shovel. Phil is too bitter to enjoy the festivities with his friends. He drowns his sorrows at the bar and ends the day alone with an icy shower and an empty bed.

Then something really weird begins to happen. February 3rd never comes. The next morning he's forced to relive the day from hell.

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Every morning from now on, is Groundhog Day, and it starts with Sonny and Cher singing "I Got You, Babe," at exactly 6 a.m. But this is Phil's private hell. Everyone else greets the day with joy, ready to contemplate the mystery of life and dance the Pennsylvania Polka. There's a great moment early on, when Phil, drinking with two locals, says, "What would you do if you were stuck in one place and every day was exactly the same and nothing you did mattered?" One of the men says, "That about sums it up for me."

At first he uses his new situation to do outrageous things. He leads the police on a car chase. He proposes to a beautiful woman knowing he'll never have to marry her; he socks the annoying salesman. There are no consequences, but there's no satisfaction either, and no change. Then he becomes interested in Rita, his producer. He tries to seduce her by finding out more about her each day and pretending to share her likes and opinions. But she always remains just beyond his grasp.

Then he begins to give up on life. Phil tries to kill himself time and again in a variety of ways, but it's no good. Each morning he awakens to the now-ominous strains of "I Got You Babe." Suicide, as he learns the hard way, is no solution. There's no exit and very little progress. Like a mouse who tries every blind alley in a maze Phil gets slapped upside the head as a result of his own bad choices.

Finally the real transformation begins, as Phil makes the slow journey from being an egocentric jerk into a man with a soul. FINALLY he starts treating the people that he sees every day with some kindness.

Very slowly he begins to make an effort. He changes flat tires and saves a kid who falls out of the tree at the same time every day. He feeds an old bum and even tries to save him from Death. He starts to like Rita for who she is, and stops treating her like a twinkie God put there for him to unwrap and consume.

Phil becomes adventurous. He takes piano lessons, he learns how to ice sculpt. And although she's too smart to sleep with him, Rita finally warms up to the good person he's becoming. In a way that was never possible before his ordeal, he breaks through to being a genuine lover – not just of Rita, but of the gift of life. His curse has become a blessing.

Well, some of you must be thinking... that's great. But I need some answers in my life. Can you give me some answers? Sometimes the point of a story or scripture is not the answer it gives you. Sometimes the most important part is the questions. Jesus told stories so often that the gospels declare that "he didn't tell them anything that wasn't couched in parables." And Jesus never answered questions that he thought people should be answering for themselves.

One of the questions God may be asking us today is have you seen your shadow?

Phil sees himself as a major talent now being courted by a major network. His cameraman, Larry, says "that would be the Home Shopping Network." Phil says he's not at all egocentric. Rita says ego is his defining characteristic. See, Phil's funny, and all that, but he's never seen the dark side of his personality – he's never seen his shadow – the lack of compassion, the way he creates distance between himself and others.

God says, to you and to me – What's your shadow? Is it fear? Is it a critical spirit? Is it a controlling personality? And God has the perfect prayer to pray if we only have the courage to pray it:

"Search me O God and know me. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139, last 2 verses.

Ask God to show you your shadow side and then get ready for God to rock your world.

A second question has to do with being stuck. Even if we're NOT in a time warp, we all know what it feels like to be stuck. Stuck in sick relationships. Stuck in our addictions. Stuck in jobs or commitments that kill our joy. Stuck inside of our own boring constructs. When you and I get stuck, every day feels the same because we're in groundhog hell. We keep making the same mistakes over and over again and getting smacked upside the head. The good news is that God is in the business of getting us UN-stuck, and God will go to great lengths to teach us what we need to know.

The question we might ask is why does God have me right here right now – and what is God trying to teach me in the flypaper years, where I'm not moving and not growing? And if God wants me to move, why am I still here?

A third question is what if there was no tomorrow? You know some religions believe we have an infinite number of chances to get it right. It doesn't really matter what you do or don't do, because you have ten thousand more chances to move forward. You can afford to put off growing. If you lose your soul you can find it again.

But Jesus presses his disciples to take up the cross and die daily. If we pass by a hungry man and do nothing he remains hungry and part of our soul sickens and dies. If we don't nourish our faith and our relationships we start dying inside. If we don't get involved in peacemaking and justice – the world grows darker every day. And pretty soon we're just like Phil. We wake up, and the only thing we care about is self.

Brothers and sisters, when the sun comes up in the morning, it's always a gift. Today is always the first day of the rest of our lives. But I believe we have a limited number of days, and in those days... in all of those seemingly small choices, we can lose our soul if we're not careful.

God says this day, to you and to me: what's your shadow? Where are you stuck? And do you understand how important your time is here on this earth?

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(continued from last page) And then there's Mary Oliver's question: What will you and I do with the one wild and precious life that God has given us? I close with words from an unknown writer about the brevity of this life:

Life passes like a flash of lightning whose blaze lasts barely long enough to see.
While earth and sky stand still forever.
How changing time flies across man's face.
O you who sit over your full cup and do not drink – tell me!
For whom are you still waiting?

Prayer: Teach us, dear God, to number our days, so that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. Show us our shadow side.... the side we're not willing to look at. Show us where we need to change... to become more loving and open. Lift us out of the quicksand and out of the mud. Liberate us so that we can become the men and women you've created us to be. Save us from the self-life and shape us into servants and healers who demonstrate the power of your love every single day. In Christ we pray. Amen.

This message was given in 2007 by **Paula Bowser**, pastor of Trotwood Church of the Brethren in southeastern Ohio adjacent to Dayton who is now retired. Married to another Church of the Brethren pastor, Paula is also a poet and writer especially interested in the intersection of the feminine and the spiritual.

(Spaces like these were used to "cut and paste" objects that we did not have an on-line version of.)

Caritas: A Year In Review

Here are the Service Reports from 2019:

Individuals served	11,254
Households served	4,423
Children (0-18)	354
Adults (18-54)	391
Seniors (55 & over)	250

Lbs of food through the Table of Plenty & Food Pantry	1,225,023
Emergency utility assistance	\$6,618.47
Hygiene & Cleaning Supplies	\$25,781.00
Fuel Vouchers	\$ 760.00
Number of Volunteers	85
Volunteer Hours	8,105
Bus Passes	15

It reminds us of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The hungry are fed and there are baskets of food left behind (which are donated to feed hungry animals).

Sue's Corner



MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL

by John Berendt



I resisted reading this book because it's nonfiction, which I generally don't care for. I decided to check this out after seeing a comment that it reads like fiction. That was such a true observation!

This is a telling of events thirty years ago in Savannah, Georgia. Each chapter is a vignette of a person, neighborhood or attitude particular to Savannah. This is a very insular town that intends to stay that way.

The main point of the story is the apparent murder of a young hustler by a wealthy antiques dealer. The book leads out with depictions of some of the more important, and also more colorful, citizens, including a voodoo practitioner. At different times, I liked or disliked them, and even laughed at some of their antics. The last third of the book deals with four murder trials over the course of eight years, finally ending in acquittal of the antiques dealer.

I don't think that's a spoiler in any way. Reading this book was way too entertaining for there to be any spoilers.



Other Caritas News

Love Thy Neighbor Food Drive! Yoke's (Indian Trail) is hosting a food drive for Caritas on Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14th from 10am-5pm. If you are due for an essentials run, please keep us in mind as you shop. Friendly Caritas volunteers will be on site collecting donations and answering questions.

Bags Bags Bags If you've been watching the news, you may know that WA state is considering a plastic bag ban. Caritas relies on donated bags to help clients transport food. Plastic bags, paper bags, reusable bags, and other grocery carriers are all needed and appreciated. Many clients walk or use public transit and are limited to what they can carry. Having bags available at Caritas is the difference between full or wanting tables.

Quaker News

Sierra-Cascades Quarterly Gathering this winter will be at on Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020, at **Silverton Friends Church** – 229 Eureka Ave, Silverton, OR 97381. Find the program for the day and how to register at scymfriends.org/newsletter.

Quaker Women – Save the Date On June 24–28, 2020, the Pacific Northwest Quaker Women's Theology Conference will meet at Cascades Camp in Yelm, WA to explore together the theme "Cultivating Faith and Hope in Troubled Times."

Northwest Quaker Men's Gathering will be April 17-19, 2020, at **Camp Tilikum**. The theme this year is Finding Our Way.

Klamath Falls Friends Church, an open and affirming semi-programmed Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers), is currently seeking a full-time pastor to journey with us. Our desired pastor will plan and present weekly messages/meditations to guide our Meetings for Worship and be called to equip and encourage all people to respond to God's love and transforming spirit. For information and inquiries, email: klamathfallsfriendschurch@gmail.com

Annual Gathering for Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends will be this June 12–14, 2020, at Canby Grove.

Bolivia Quaker Education Fund is sponsoring a two-week tour of Bolivia, July 9-22, 2020, with an emphasis on studying climate change and its impact. The itinerary will include La Paz, the stunning flats of solar de Uyuni, Quaker communities in the Altiplano, and pre-Incan ruins of Tiwanaku, and Lake Titicaca. For further information, email qst.bolivia@gmail.com



2020 BENEFIT LUNCH
FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2020

2020 BENEFIT BREAKFAST
MONDAY MARCH 9, 2020

In support of The Fig Tree

Plan now to attend one of these events






AVP Goes to Prison

The Spokane **Alternatives to Violence Project** sent three facilitators to Geiger Corrections Facility in early March. They were invited to offer the "basic" (18-hour) AVP workshop (18 hours) to inmates in six sessions over a two-week period as a pilot program. Eight people signed up for the class, meeting in a room with an officer present at all times but sitting away from the group and not participating.

Seven of the eight inmates completed the course; one had to miss a session because of a court date, but he returned to the class even though he could not receive a certificate. Participants were asked to evaluate the course, and several expressed interest in continuing in the program. Then a follow-up meeting between facilitators and prison officials resulted in a request for AVP to offer the program as often as they could arrange facilitators. A workshop for women inmates was also requested.

Several members of Spokane Friends have participated in AVP Workshops and one has completed the training program for facilitators. We have also cooperated with AVP in offering the use of our facility for AVP workshops.






What the Heck is a Quaker Anyway?

Are there any left? What do they believe? How can I find them?

Get the answers to these and many other questions as we celebrate

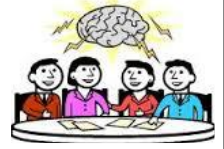
Quaker Distinctives Month

Spokane Friends Church (A Quaker Meeting)
1612 West Dalke
(between Maple and Ash, one block south of Francis)
Every Sunday in February at 10:00 a.m.



MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

19 January 2019



The meeting was opened by Presiding Clerk, Jonas Cox. The December minutes were read and approved as read. 14 people were in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: Caritas has started paying \$550 a month for using our facility. We are looking to close the books on 2019 and start clean in 2020. A new attendee, Shannon Reinders has offered her services with Quick Books to help our system run more smoothly.

Elder's Report: The previous messages and speakers have been reviewed. A decision was made to have funds (gifts) given for Paul Blankenship's education may be refunded or given to Paul directly for his next semester of school concerning his doctoral dissertation. We may need to have some type of policy for this in the future. The church secretary will communicate this to attenders by email. Friends Education classes will start in February. Colin Saxton will be our first speaker on February 2nd during worship. The Maronis have offered their home to show movies about the subject on February 7th and 23rd. Charlene Cox has been recommended to serve as an Elder.

Stewards & Trustees Report: We are continuing to work on the women's bathroom in the lower level. There has been a repair done on parts of our flat roof. There is a question if we should consider looking at a new roof in the spring or summer.

With no further old or new business and all hearts and minds were clear, the meeting was dismissed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted:

Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

Everybody thinks
of changing
humanity and
no one thinks of
changing himself.
– Leo Tolstoy

Taizé Prayer Service
4:15 to 5 pm Thursday afternoons
The Ministry Institute (TMI)
405 E. Sinto, 2 blocks north of St. Aloysius Church
We welcome you to this time of reflection and contemplation.
NO TAIZÉ PRAYER SERVICE FEB 6

The Gideons are coming!
On Tuesday, February 4, our Missions Committee will be serving a spaghetti dinner. The donation will go to Jonathan and Carol Williams. A sign-up sheet is in the hospitality area if you can help.