

SPOKANEWORD

June
2020



Spokane Friends

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Sunday Schedule
during
Covid-19 Restrictions

Morning Worship
10:00 am
Via Zoom

See Website For Link

Unlovable by Colin Saxton

When Kevin’s mother called me to tell me he had run away from home, she was crying. Anger, fear, and exhaustion poured out of her through the phone. She wept as she explained how her son told her he would rather live on the streets of Portland, Oregon, than stay one more day with her and his younger brother. He didn’t need them or want them—and at fifteen years old, he was perfectly able to fend for himself.

The mom, in my view, had done her best trying to raise two very challenging boys in an impoverished neighborhood, with little help from family, no church to surround her, and rapidly diminishing emotional reserves. She was at the end of her rope, ready to give up. Except she couldn’t. Her son—*her son*—was missing. “Please,” she said, “will you find him and bring him home to me?”

I met Kevin while working in a ministry focused on “troubled teens.” These were kids in prison, group homes, and treatment centers in the 1980’s. We connected while he was in a detention hall, arrested for prostitution, trying to earn cash to feed his growing drug use. . .

In my office there was a poster of an old, homeless drunk passed out on a street corner. Beneath the jarring picture came a more jarring quote often attributed to Dorothy Day, “You really only love Jesus as much as the person you love the least.”

A drunk like the one on the poster or a boy like Kevin were not the hardest people for me to love. I got them on some level. I could understand, a bit from my own experience, how or why someone could find themselves in the spot they were in.

As I began my search for Kevin, I happened to meet one of the kind of people I do find most challenging to love. Two well-dress businessmen bustled out of a bar. They were laughing and talking together, wrapping their coats tightly around themselves as protection from the cold, rainy night. As I followed them for several blocks, they came across a homeless man holding a sign asking for help. They slowed and approached him—I thought they would drop a bit of change into his box. Instead, one of them said, “Get off my block you piece of stuff!” But “stuff” was not the word he used.

I don’t remember now what I yelled at the two men. It wasn’t kind. One of them turned and told me to go somewhere—warmer than Portland, as I recall. In many ways I was no better than they were at dealing with others who are challenging to love. In that moment, I was reminded I still had very far to go in learning to love Christ.

Around 2:30 a.m., I found Kevin. He said, “Are you looking for me and how did you find me?” I told him his mother sent me and God had led me to him. “She loves you and wants you to come home.”

At that moment something struck a chord in his heart and this angry young man became a child again. In the early morning hours we drove home and had breakfast with his mother. Together once more, they embraced each other and the challenging work of being family.

This experience came to me recently as I was reading the book of Hosea and reflecting on our cultural crisis and the way people are expressing their angst and anger toward each other. In a recent research study on social media, the author discovered that rage is currently the ruling online emotion expressed through tweets and posts. We are an angry people—

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I see this reality showing up in my little circle of Facebook friends — people I otherwise know as reasonable and likable. Some say they will no longer be “friends” with those who voted for *that candidate*. Others unfriend anyone who will not subscribe to their perspective on one of today’s controversial issues. They are done — no longer willing to engage those who are too difficult to love. Others write about being moved to become more outspoken, more in-your-face, more prophetic, in light of new political realities. I get this impulse — *even though I think Christians are always supposed to be a prophetic people*. What concerns me in this surge of urgent action is, what drives this impulse? The Holy Spirit and a sense of call — or more rage and anxiety?

The book of Hosea offers a glorious and gruesome account of the world we inhabit and how God engages us along the way. Like so many Old Testament stories, it is challenging to read, describing in vivid detail a deeply broken world. It is ripe with images of pain and injustice. Suffering confronts us in ways not easily explained. The narrative is messy — often failing to live up to our expectations of what life could and should be like. It is a world beyond our easy manipulation and control — and sometimes, we fear, beyond God’s.

The story begins with God’s stark command to the prophet Hosea to go and marry a whore and love her — really love her. Have children together. Be a family. In this way, Hosea’s life will serve as a parable explaining God’s relationship with Israel. Over several early chapters Hosea’s wife, Gomer, spurns him for other lovers. It is painful to read — the pain it brings to her, to him, the impact upon their children, and the reminder of ways that women are systematically abused within cultures of violence and exploitation. And the pain runs deeper, because underlying this one family’s trauma is the reminder of a cosmic drama where humans just like you and me consistently play the role of Gomer when it comes to fidelity toward a God who loves us. Looking past the hard-to-love character of Gomer, many of us wind up seeing ourselves, if we are willing.

In the story, we also see Hosea and God’s relentless devotion. Patience and understanding are shown in the face of betrayal. Tough-but-real love gets expressed even when thoroughly rejected. Love that will not let go holds on in the fragile hope that adulteress Gomer, faithless Israel — you and I — might come home.

Unwilling to give up, Hosea redeems Gomer from a life of shame and exploitation. He accepts the challenge of loving her back into the family. He acts in ways that restore her dignity. Hosea will not let go of her — not because he could not — but because he *would* not. In whatever limited and imperfect ways human behavior ever begins to reflect divine behavior—here is a start.

Late in the book, the imagery shifts from husband/wife to parent/child, and reveals some of the anger and angst stirring in God. In the whirl of political chaos, personal anguish, and spiritual depravity, God gets angry. Angry. This is a reality many people find uncomfortable. We prefer a placid, domesticated God—one who happily puts up with all of our *stuff* without batting an eye. If God really loves us, shouldn’t he accept us just as we are?!

But in Hosea’s experience, fierce anger arises from frustrated and flummoxed love. It is the exasperation and heartache of a devoted mother being blown off by the surly, hormonal teenager. It is the flaring frustration of an anxious father, worried sick by a child out of control.

Just when the last reserves of love seem nearly drained away, and fury is about to breach the heart of God, there is a pause in the narrative. We can’t know how long or short it lasts, but it shows up right between verses 7 and 8 of Hosea 11. In that quiet moment, God’s heart recoils. In the Hebrew, it is described as something like an earthquake that takes place inwardly rather than outwardly. Changed, God says:

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God and not a man—the Holy One among you.”

On the verge of erupting in anger when his love is rejected, God stills himself—and bears the wound of love in his heart. Despite the pain and justifiable anger, loving compassion and mercy are shown to a people who are immensely hard to love. “And so I am not going to act on my anger. . . And why? Because I am God and not a human.” (continued on next page)

Rather than expressing angry retribution outwardly, the suffering love of God is held inwardly. Instead of venting, un-friending, cutting others down, and cutting others off, God extends mercy, shows compassion, stays engaged. Without pretending there is no problem or excusing the adulteress ways of Gomers like me, God reveals compassion as a greater means to transformation and restoration than outrage can ever be.

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When it comes to being a prophetic people who so urgently and desperately want to work for change in the world, I am mindful of what a wise civil rights leader told me several years ago: "You can't be a prophet among people you do not love" Today, in our time, I would add — especially among those we love the least.

I don't know a simple formula for turning rage and anger into compassion and mercy. Maybe it begins by remembering the relentless patience that God has shown to Gomers like us. Maybe it is nurtured in the knowledge that we are not God. And maybe it comes through a sturdy, resilient hope in a love that does not withdraw because of heartache, but continues to move, pursue, and transform others despite heartache. Even—and maybe even especially—those we love the least.

Colin Saxton recently concluded his work as General Secretary of Friends United Meeting, serving this global community of Quakers since 2011. Prior to that, he was Superintendent of Northwest Yearly Meeting for over seven years, spent 16 years in pastoral ministry and ten years as an adjunct professor at George Fox University and Seminary. This article is slightly condensed from his contribution to the April 2017 issue of Quaker Life.

Spokane Friends Continue to Zoom

Governor Inslee has lifted the ban on congregations returning to church buildings, provided a number of restrictions are implemented. We have a large number of people who are in the high risk category for COVID-19 and want them to continue to be safe. So we will continue to use Zoom for our Meetings for Worship and Business. If you are not on our email list and want to attend virtual services, contact the Office and we can send you the virtual link for the appropriate meetings. Links also appear on our website at spokanefriends.com.

... but hope to return to the Meeting House

For those who wish to meet in person for worship, we plan to conduct Zoom services from the Meeting House, so that either option is available to our members and attenders.

Our first trial run will occur on June 14. If you plan to come to worship in person, please be aware of the Governor's guidelines below:

- Attendees must wear face masks and maintain social distancing.
- They must use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving.
- Nothing can be consumed while in the building.
- Singing is permitted with face masks.

Those attending via Zoom will use the link provided by the Office, just as they have during the last two months.

Sue's Corner



THEREBY HANGS A TAIL by Spencer Quinn



Quinn has written a series of light mysteries that are solved by Bernie Little (owner of the Little Detective Agency) and Chet. The Dog, Who narrates the stories in a very humorous dog-like fashion. If you know dogs at all, you will enjoy Chef's thought processes.

This story involves Chet and Bernie being hired to investigate threats made against a pampered show dog named Princess (think hyperactive toy poodle) and her high maintenance owner. There are kidnappings, murder, a creepy ghost town and potential doggie romance.

Chet is a great narrator. He thinks like a human but is confused by figures of speech such as "crocodile tears" and "red herring".

Virtual Speaker Schedule

June 7	August Shushin Peterson
June 14	Getry Agizah
June 24	Deborah Suess
June 28	Paul Blankenship
July 12	Sarah Scott

MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

24 May 2020



The meeting was opened with prayer by Assistant Presiding Clerk Jon Maroni. The minutes of the two called business meetings in April were read and approved as read. Approximately 16 people were available during this virtual meeting.

Pastor's Report: Paul reported that he has been our Interim pastor for the past year. He has appreciated our love and friendship. Now that he has completed his PhD he will be looking for opportunities in the Academic field. He is willing to continue in his current capacity for a couple more months but that will depend on the job opportunities in his field.

Elder's Report: We have reviewed the virtual worship meetings that we have had. We have the next 2 months covered for pulpit speakers.

The street light on Dalke has been replaced after it was hit by a car.

Action item 1. We would like to continue the Covenant with Paul Blankenship through approximately July 31, 2020 with a raise in the monthly salary we have been paying him this past year. It may need to be month to month depending on his job situation. This was **approved** by the meeting.

Action item 2. Discussion was held regarding the amount above \$1,000 a month that would be offered to Paul. The amount ranges from \$300 to \$500 a month. An email will be sent out to our attendees regarding a financial plan and how much people are willing to commit to each month. It was **approved** to send out this email this week and the Treasurer will bring the findings back to another called business meeting on May 31st. This was approved.

Treasurer's Report: Jon presented a spread sheet concerning our church's financial situation and the breakdown of expenses including tithes, offerings and donations. Currently we have over \$7,000 in our checking account; included in that are 4 to 5 thousand in reserves. Jon will be looking into setting up an on-line giving system that is free to the meeting. He will involve the Stewards and Trustees Committee regarding this.

New Business: The decision regarding the virtual meetings and/or returning to the meeting house for services will be given to the Elders for consideration

Another called business meeting will be on Sunday May 31st.

With no further business and all hearts were clear the meeting was closed in prayer by Bob Wiese.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Nixon, Recording Secretary

Encouragement from the Dalai Lama

You can accept that your relationship with your neighbor is difficult and that you would like to improve it. You may or may not succeed, but all you can do try. You cannot control your neighbor, but you do have some control over your thoughts and feelings. Instead of anger, instead of hatred, instead of fear, you can cultivate compassion for them, you can cultivate kindness for them, you can cultivate warmheartedness toward them. This is the only chance to improve the relationship. In time, maybe they will become less difficult. Maybe not. This you cannot control, but you will have your peace of mind. You will be able to be joyful and happy whether your neighbor becomes less difficult or not.

The
14th
Dalai Lama
Of
Tibet

Caritas Stats for April 2020

Individuals served	942
Households served	423
Children (0-18)	228
Adults (18-54)	365
Seniors (55 & over)	349
Lbs. of food through the Table of Plenty & Food Pantry	34,130
Hygiene & Cleaning Supplies	\$ 550.00
Number of Volunteers	51
Volunteer Hours	1,828

COVID-19: The Monthly Summary shows an uptick in clients served compared to last month and the same period last year. I cannot express how grateful I am for the prayers and support you have shown during this crisis. We are continuing to serve Grab&Go food kits and hygiene supplies as Spokane maintains social distance guidelines. Your donations have allowed us to keep up a supply of nutritional foods! Amen!

If any seniors or immunocompromised members of your congregation are housebound and in need of food or hygiene supplies, contact us for help.

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."
Hebrews 6:10 (NIV)

Kelsie Rowland

On June 14, we will have the opportunity to meet Getry Agizah, a Quaker from Kenya who has been a Program Coordinator for Friends Peace Teams. This group is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peace, healing, and reconciliation. They build on extensive Quaker experience combining a practical and spiritual aspects of grassroots conflict resolution. They work in East Africa, Asia West Pacific, Central and South America, and with Native Americans. Find more information at <https://friendspeaceteams.org/>

Quaker News

- ⇒ **Northwest Yearly Meeting** annual sessions will be held virtually on July 19-21, 2020. Main speaker will be Joseph Clair, PhD., Dean of College of Christian Studies, Liberal Arts, and Honors & Associate Professor of Theology at George Fox University. His theme will be "Thriving."
- ⇒ **Annual Gathering** for Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends will be virtual via Zoom due to the current pandemic. We are now accepting registrations for the sessions, which will be June 12-14, 2020. To see the sessions offered, go to <https://www.scymfriends.org/annual-conference>. To register, please send an email with your name, email address, Church/Meeting affiliation and family members who will be on-line with you to registrar@scymf.org. You must pre-register to receive the Zoom link for any session. They will not be posted publicly due to security issues.
- ⇒ Come walk with **West Hills Friends** into the future. We are seeking an exceptional individual to join our welcoming and uniquely diverse Quaker community as a released minister. If you are interested in learning more about this position, go to <https://westhillsfriends.org/jobposting>
- ⇒ **Thursdays with Friends** is a new online conversation series brought to you by FCNL during this period of great difficulty when we are isolated from our loved ones. It is a 30-minute community chat on issues that Quakers and people of faith continue to work on, whatever the circumstances. For more information, go to <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/thursdays-with-friends-2695>
- ⇒ **Quaker Voluntary Service** is hiring for the part-time position of Portland Coordinator in Portland, OR! We're seeking a motivated, Quaker-Friendly, self-directed individual who feels passionate about supporting young adults during their year of working for social justice, exploring spirituality, and living in community. This person will work extensively with QVS Fellows, local Quakers and area nonprofits. Read more at www.quakervoluntaryservice.org/employment-at-qvs/
- ⇒ **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.



Photo by Sarah Peterson

Going Public with Quakerism

Six of us (members, Friends, sympathizers) peace-loving friends were present at the demonstration in downtown Spokane on Sunday, May 31. to protest the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police last Monday. Over 1,000 people gathered in Riverfront Park and marched in peaceful protest to the Spokane County Courthouse. Many carried signs saying "Black Lives Matter" and "I Can't Breathe,"



Photo by Krista Maroni

Most of us left after the organized protest ended, except for Karli Norman, who was on hand to offer medical aid during the evening when clashes with police began. A curfew was put in place, and tear gas and rubber bullets were used by police after a Nike store was looted. Some of the protesters tried to protect the store by linking arms to form a line in front of the store.



The Summer issue of The Fig Tree is published online at <https://www.thefigtree.org>

Read about decisions of faith based camps, experiences of funeral directors, the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, the strike of Yakima agricultural workers for COVID protection and pay, and more.

THE GARDEN

So pure
A hideaway
As the longevity of her soul
Lush into the earth
She pulls
the stubborn mantle back
To plant her seeds.

Sparrow

FAITH ACTION NETWORK

"... Love and justice and truth are the only Monuments that generate ever-widening circles of energy and life." — Alice Walker

FAN's theme for this year is "Protecting What We Love," and the Network has been hard at work this spring not only advocating for compassionate and just legislation at the state level, but also supported outreach for Census 2020. On May 31, 2020, FAN's Eastern Washington Spring Summit met virtually in Spokane.

We are invited to help FAN mark its 9th birthday on June 11. by making a special contribution any time this month. Every dollar that we give will be doubled up to \$8,500 by Rick Steves and several Board members. Visit FANWA.org anytime this month to help unlock these matching gifts. At the 2019 FAN Dinner last November, Rick Steves said:

"We care, we give, we change the world together. And Faith Action Network gives our work traction. It's a way to scale up our love."