

SPOKANENWORD

January
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The Power of Being Quaker in Public

by Laura Boles

I'm really big on Quakers announcing themselves to the world and owning the glory that is Quakers and all of the greatness that we have and labeling that and not just being like "Oh, I'm a humble person in the world. I'm at my 20th protest, you know, this week but I'm just going to wear black and sit in the corner and just, you know, have my little sign." I want people to say, "I am a Quaker and I believe this is right, and I am here at this protest as a Quaker."

My name is Laura Boles. I live in Mill Valley, California, and my meeting is Strawberry Creek Meeting in Berkley. I had really a vision in my meeting. It was pretty powerful. I just felt like... I was listening to business meeting droning on about something or other and I just kind of lost it and just stood up and was like, "I — I don't want to hide behind Quaker process. I don't want to hide behind endless committee meetings talking on and on. I don't want to hide behind consensus. I want to do something and I want to do something now. I don't want to wait, and we cannot wait." So, I started a group in my meeting called Quaker Action Worship Group, and I said, you know, we are going to concentrate on action. We are going to go out with Quaker banners, Quaker t-shirts. We have got to label ourselves Quaker and be present in the most vocal way, and it's very un-Quaker. It's not what Quakers like to do. They don't want to be, you know, showboating or saying, you know, how we got the answer, but I am saying we got the answer and I want people to see what we're all about and I want to offer us up to the world. We started just showing up at events and saying "We're here, we're standing up!"

The Value of Public Silent Worship Any kind of march or public witness of any kind, we start with silent witness and that can be great and beautiful because you're in the middle of this, you know, march or this rally. We're this island of silence in all the— all the protestors, you know, everyone's running around trying to find their friends or the police are usually everywhere and there's, you know, helicopters and squad cars and firetrucks going, you know, and we're there silently. For me, the power is bringing that silent, loving holding presence to a group of people who are angry and who are so disturbed and so frantic, and it can really bring another level.

Building Community with Quaker Tools

Quakers have a good reputation. We have good PR, we have good— we have good marketing value, you know? I think we have a reputation as a group with integrity. I think we have a reputation as people who say what they're going to do and do it. So, I think we should use that reputation, we should use that power we have, I mean, and flex it. For us, it's a practice and a way of life, but I also look at it in a very utilitarian way also in that it's a tool. What I mean when I'm saying it, what I mean is Quaker listening, and by that I mean listening for that of God within someone. When someone's talking to me, I am listening actively for the light within them. The challenge is to see beyond and see in and pick out the parts that are of the light and fortify and concentrate those pieces, and that is just the time consuming and kind of rather disturbing, ya know, it's just like, "oh God, I have to slog through another, you know, meeting and greet. More people, more people. But I think that's what Quakers, the strength of them is and the power of them is, and I would like to see more of it in the world.

(continued on next page)

Sunday Schedule
during
Covid-19 Restrictions

Morning Worship

10:00 am

At Meeting House

And Via Zoom

See Website For Link

Discussion Questions:

- How can we abide by Quaker process and still be present in times that require immediate action?
- Do you use “Quaker tools” to connect with others and organize for social change? If so, how? If not, why?

Note: The article above is a transcript of a video presentation by Laura Boles. It is part of a series, sponsored by *Friends Journal*, called **QuakerSpeak**, which presents a new video every Thursday on the Quaker YouTube channel. *The views expressed in this video are of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views of Friends Journal or its collaborators.* The producer of the series is Rebecca Hamilton, who travels around the country and interviews **Friends of all different backgrounds** and asks them the core questions of Quakerism. You can subscribe to it for free by visiting <https://quakerspeak.com/subscribe/>

(Information for Legislative Conference, Jan 30, 2021, go to www.thefigtree.org)

(Information for Fig Tree Fund-Raising Breakfasts in March 2021, go to www.thefigtree.org)



Anatomy of Murder
by Imogen Robertson

Sue's Corner



London, 1781

This story started slowly with events that don't seem to be related: a drowning in the Thames and an accident at sea that severely injures the husband of another main character.

Harriet and her idiosyncratic friend Crowther spend less than a week investigating the murder and discovering an operating spy ring giving British intelligence information to the French. Woven into the story and adding to the plot are opera, a fortune teller, the homeless and I did expect some version of Scrooge's ghosts! (Didn't happen.)

This was an interesting look at the attitudes of the time. Rachel, Harriet's sister, is suitably appalled by this very inappropriate association with murder, fearing it would affect their social standing and her chances of a marriage. Marriage being Job #1 for women of the day.

Note: This is the second of a new monthly column which we hope will represent Quakerism, raise questions, and perhaps even elicit responses and/or letters to the writer of the column. Please address any responses to "afriend" and send them to spokanefriends@gmail.com

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: 2021

The vexing problem of justification
by afriend



"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness." Charles Dickens considered in contemporary terms, our nation presently seems a tale of two countries, generated by a political schism and cloaked in *gaslight fumes*, where allegations seem real but prove misleading.

Legions of us are dying from COVID-19. Reality is what happens; reality when altered is pseudo-truth buried in a black hole, a biased deception. Caution marks last year's attitudes, and there's no way to accurately measure our future, but please accept that our present experience demands a call-to-action. Recall Leonard Cohen: "There is a crack in everything, that how the light gets in."

Presently one sneeze might clear an audience. Hope has become a spirit-of-doubt. Better to think faith is the foundation of growth. Who will speak for the unity of a divided nation? Historians, in view of our early century virus phenomenon, may not define who we are, but what we have become!

Take a lift from Patrick Henry's 1775 speech before Virginia delegates warning to avoid "lying on our backs and hugging the illusive phantom of hope." As a country defined by factions of belief, we potentially fail to distinguish between lies and truth. It appears a clarion call, a warning for more articulate leadership, to work on a recalibration of ethical standards, the body and mind of American thought.

This is "a year of expectation".* Breathing space is essential for thoughtful solutions, that is to suggest a reset of basic needs!

Focus is required as the foundation of progress. Little is gained by adlibbing future decisions regarding our welfare and longevity as a nation. Consider: tyranny is easy --organize an angry crowd; democracy is hard --attempt to satisfy a diverse society.

How is it that we can rationalize doing harm to each other? Anger destroys reason. There's a realistic limit that supports how far we act on our social concerns. We are unwise to turn away from the present issues that divide us.

Disinformation over time turns into referenced fact, manufacturing the nails and hammers for building fences between states? Not productive: a wound to the heart, and a cancer for the soul.

Fate is in our hands. Find ways to embrace neighbors in search of mutual prosperity. If national longevity counts, it's worth the effort. Our children deserve a future, one of realistic dreams and tangible goals.

It's praiseworthy to promote a safe society. You can't have your own way. There are laws to govern irregular behavior, affecting your life and others. To fail you potentially face rejection, worse live behind iron bars, sadder bending your elbow in a bar thinking laws are for thee, but not for me!

Our position: The Society of Friends is not affiliated with any political party or position. As noted by John Spears from the Princeton Quaker Meeting "Friends are obligated by right and duty, living in a democracy, to speak their convictions."

Your point of view is a significant factor in reestablishing a flexible domestic unity. Questions must be posed; resolution must be sought but be aware, as Bob Dylan chanted: "...the answer my friend is blowing in the wind". Set your sail. Seek a tranquil solution. Kwame Anthony Appiah, a philosophy teacher at NYU wrote, "We the people in a democracy are supposed to guide the ship of state," and it also takes a calm hand at the tiller in a storm.

To make progress in the next few years, realize the need to sew a cultural rip, the shards of a fractured society. It's been suggested "that freedom without responsibility is manslaughter."** (continued on p. 3)

* Mark Shields

**William Falk, Editor-in-Chief THE WEEK

(continued from p. 3)

Accept that we pay a high price for free speech. By example, visionary George Fox, a 17th Century English dissenter, founded the Religious Society of Friends and rebelled against spiritual and political authorities by proposing an uncompromising approach to Christian faith. Both he and his wife were harshly jailed for their strong beliefs.

If ever there's a need for American revival, it's now. Consider peace through reflection. Realistic compromise offers a diplomatic solution –not easy but avoids harm! Acceptance makes for change, as in the words of author Don DeLillo: “Life can get so interesting that we forget to be afraid.”

When memories collide, reflecting on what seem a wounded legacy, fixated on the value of democratic traditions, meditate on the positive. Make this year's chant: “faith, hope and especially charity”.

Frankly spoken, many of our neighbors are staring at empty plates, as needful citizens stand in line at food banks, undeniably a heartbreak.

Happy New Year: seek peace, keep faith. Do not reject our historic traditions for they have been hard-earned. We have amendments to fine tune our Constitution. Put that nagging genie back in the bottle! The backbone of our democratic tradition is tolerance!

What are your expectations for 2021?

Write to a friend at spokanefriends@gmail.com

Next month: Valentine Spirits!

MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

20 December 2020

The meeting was opened by Presiding Clerk Jonas Cox. 15 people were in attendance. The November minutes were read and approved as read.



Treasurer's Report: Jon Maroni reported we are doing well. We are approximately \$5500 to the good. He will meet with the Elders about the status of online giving.

Stewards and Trustees Report: No official report today.

Elders Report: Pam Emery reported that they have been working on the speakers for January and part of February. A message from Colin Saxton called “What is God calling us to do” will be given in January. Projects will be looked at regarding our giving.

Old Business:

1. Caritas has given us a response to our recent proposal. An Agreement will be written up and given to the Caritas Board. Kent Biel and Bill Emery will be our Liasons to speak to Caritas for our meeting.
2. The Workshop with Colin Saxton regarding financial training, called Faith and Generosity, was discussed. We are asked to implement a plan to take action. We need to come up with a vision and mission statement. A report was given by Kent Biel (attached). Of particular interest and commended by the Meeting was the definition of generosity from Lake Institute: “Generosity is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly. It is a learned character trait that involves attitude and action entailing both the inclination and actual practice of giving liberally. It is not a haphazard behavior byt a basic orientation to life. What generosity gives can vary: money, time, attention, aid, encouragement, and more, but it always intends to enhance the true well-being of the receiver. Like all virtues, generosity is in people's genuine enlightened self-interest to learn and practice.”

With no further old or new business and all hearts and minds clear Anya Lawrence dismissed in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

Quaker News

- ⇒ Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) is offering a helpful resource for anyone looking to become more engaged with climate action. The series connects people with international efforts that can strengthen climate action at all levels. For more information go to <https://quno.org/timeline/2020/12/quno-launches-peoples-climate-empowerment-series>
- ⇒ The next **Quarterly Gathering** for Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends is scheduled for Saturday, February 20, 2021. The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom.
- ⇒ Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends **Annual Sessions** are scheduled for Friday to Sunday, June 18–20, 2021, and we are tentatively planning on meeting in person at Canby Grove.
- ⇒ **The National Alliance on Mental Health** has 24-hr support through their helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI or text "NAMI" to 741741.

From the Desk at the Meeting House

- A Christmas card from the Larsons, including a family photo.
- A New Year's card from Dave and Carol Schmidt and family, "Happy 2021! With Love" and some family photos.**
- A Christmas card from Linda Pierce with the note "Peace, joy and light to all of Spokane Friends and the whole world!"*
- A letter from Wes Teterud, President of Widows Might, saying "Heidi called me last week about her daughter Nicole (39), who not only lost her husband in Sept. 2020, but also lost her job in food services, her unemployment benefits and her husband's social security insurance. Your generous contribution to Widows Might made it possible to assist in paying Nicole's mortgage and her utilities right before Christmas. Thank you on behalf of Widows Might for your part in caring for widows." Wes was an invited speaker at our Meeting in October.
- From Becky Williams: "Merry Christmas, Church Family!" I think of you fondly with all those memories — 48 years of them! Blessings on you all. We are blessed in this world of 2020. We have Jesus! We know this earthly life is not the end. May you continue in earnest telling, living, Jesus' Love."

Caritas Needs



Food

Mac and Cheese Canned Fruit
Soup

Necessities

Dish Soap Laundry Soap
Paper Bags Plastic Bags
Paper Towels

Caritas News: We desperately need more volunteers Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 2 pm. Volunteers must be able to team up to lift up to 50 pounds. Also the Governor's protocols are followed while working inside the Meeting House.

Keeping up with Caritas:

A new Sponsor Church, **Northside Church of Christ**, has joined us in supporting Caritas, bringing our total to 17 churches serving the north side community of Spokane in this way.

Caritas has remained open throughout the pandemic. Much attention is given to keeping volunteers and clients safe and healthy and keeping the facilities clean and sanitary. Since the facility is small and social distancing can be a challenge, clients wait outside for food to be brought to them.

Food drives and donations are down, but people needing assistance is up dramatically and continuing to rise. All donations can be dropped off at the Meeting House. See more ways to give at

<https://caritasoutreachministries.org/>

Caritas and Spokane Friends have negotiated a new Memorandum of Understanding under which the monthly donation toward upkeep of the building will be \$750 per month. Sharing expenses on some changes to spruce up the inside of the building is also part of the agreement.

The latest Caritas Newsletter for the winter season also included this note:

Thank You for Your Hospitality

We want to thank Spokane Friends Church for their on-going hospitality and allowing us to provide this service to the disadvantaged people of North Spokane neighborhoods. Without you, we could not do our Lord's work! A picture of the Meeting House was also included.



Paul Benz to Retire at End of 2021

As FAN prepares to celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2021, our beloved Co-Director Paul Benz, leading our policy work since 2011 (and the Lutheran Public Policy Office before that) is retiring at the end of 2021. FAN Governing Board Co-Chair, Rev. Carol Jensen, shared, "The FAN Board greatly appreciates the leadership, dedication, and accomplishments of Paul over FAN's 10-year history. The truth is that FAN would probably not have come into being without Paul, and our legislative victories and organizational expansion over the past decade owe a great deal to him."



Spokane Friends Church has been a member of FAN since February 2023.