

SPOKANEWORD

April
2021



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What Did Easter Mean to Early Quakers

by David K. Leonard

What does Easter mean to Quakers? It clearly means different things to different individuals and groups of us. From the earliest days of the Religious Society of Friends, we have resisted having a creed, and George Fox considered theology nothing but “notions” that got in the way of true Christian experience.

Furthermore, Quakers have always resisted the idea that some days in the Christian calendar are more holy than others. Every day is equally important to our spiritual life. After all, none of the dates for our religious holidays are rooted in historical fact. Even Easter weekend, which the Bible clearly puts at the time of the Jewish Passover, perversely is usually celebrated at a different time. Although public and Christian schools give a holiday for Easter, spring break in many Quaker schools is separate from Easter and doesn’t include it.

Nonetheless, Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Christ, about which there are a variety of “notions” in most meetings, partly rooted in distinct views about Christ held by early Friends. Quakerism arose in the mid 1600s in part as a result of the widespread availability of the Bible in English; it was also a response to the discovery that the established church hierarchies had been distorting the message of the gospel and the practices of the early Christian Church, as presented in Acts and the Epistles. People at that time didn’t have available to them higher criticism, hermeneutics, or early Church manuscripts. So early Friends all would have seen the resurrection as an uncomplicated fact. Their understanding of the resurrection, however, was colored by their experience of the presence of God in their midst. Continuing revelation was a tool for understanding Scripture and extending our understanding of God’s will.



The quarter of the English populace that was influenced by Quakerism in the seventeenth century were deeply dissatisfied with various theologies offered by those with divinity school educations (then provided in England only by Oxford and Cambridge). These people considered themselves seekers and disassociated themselves not only from the Church of England and the Catholic Church, but also from the other available theologies of the day, such as those of Calvinists and Baptists.

The foundational experience of these seekers is exemplified by Fox, who after talking with a wide variety of ministers and being dissatisfied with their notions received an opening that “There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.” By this he meant not only were trained ministers not needed to mediate his relationship with God but that Christ could be experienced directly. Fox wrote: “Though I read the Scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not but by revelation.” Fox insisted again and again that he “knew experimentally” the truths he ministered—that the Inward Light, the Presence of Christ, the Indwelling Seed gave him a direct experience that affirmed particular insights or “openings” for him.

Thomas Ellwood, another founding Friend, similarly wrote: “Now also did I receive a new law, an inward law superadded to the outward, ‘the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,’ which wrought in me against all evil, not only in deed and in word, but even in thought also.”

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Sunday Schedule
during
Covid-19 Restrictions

Morning Worship

10:00 am

At Meeting House

And Via Zoom

See Website For Link

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Quakers insisted that the spirit of Christ that was experienced by Jesus's disciples after the resurrection, by Paul on the road to Damascus and in gatherings of the early Church, is universally available to everyone in all ages, locations, and cultures

For early Quakers, Christ was not tied just to Jesus, but, as with the Word in the Gospel of John, was present from the beginning and is manifest in the prophets of Judaism and other religious traditions. One might say today it does not matter if the resurrection of Jesus was physical or spiritual, for, from the beginning, Quakers have insisted that Christ's spirit can be experienced by any of us anywhere. Hence Mary Fisher, one of Quakerism's founding Valiant Sixty, felt confident she could minister to the Sultan of Turkey, because he would know the same universal spirit of God or Christ that she did.

It is significant that when Fox and Ellwood speak of their experience of the divine presence, they speak of Christ Jesus, thereby distinguishing themselves from Calvinists' claims (and later, Methodists') that "Jesus Christ is my personal lord and savior." Calvinists stress that we are convicted of sin and liberated from it only by the sacrificial crucifixion of Jesus. Fox explicitly criticized Calvinists for "preach[ing] up sin." The traditional Quaker view instead is that the active presence of God, of the universal Christ, received into our lives gives us the self-understanding, commitment, and divine support—the Inward Light—to improve the ethical content of our lives.

As a consequence of the effect of the Light, they were changed people. William Penn observed:

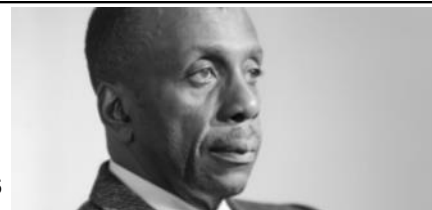
They were changed men themselves before they went about to change others. Their hearts were rent as well as their garments changed; and they knew the power and work of God upon them. . . . The bent and stress of their ministry was conversion to God; regeneration and holiness. Not schemes of doctrines and verbal creeds, nor new forms of worship; but a leaving off in religion the superfluous, and reducing the ceremonious and formal part, and pressing earnestly the substantial, the necessary and profitable part to the soul.

Let us then think of the risen Christ as a transforming experience of the Divine that is available on any day of the year without regard to religion or theology.

David K. Leonard is a member of Birmingham (Pa.) Meeting, which invited him to share these thoughts as a talk on Easter Sunday in 2019. It was reprinted in the March 2020 issue of [Friends Journal](#).

A Word from Howard Thurman

RESURRECTION: The Glad Surprise



There is ever something compelling and exhilarating about the glad surprise. The emphasis is upon *glad*. There are surprises that are shocking, startling, frightening and bewildering. But the glad surprise is something different from all of these. It carries with it the element of elation, of life, of something over and beyond the surprise itself. The experience itself comes at many levels: the simple joy that comes when one discovers that the balance in the bank is larger than the personal record indicated—and there is no error in accounting; the realization that one does not have his doorkey—the hour is late and everyone is asleep—but someone very thoughtfully left the latch off, "just in case;" the dreaded meeting in a conference to work out some problems of misunderstanding, and things are adjusted without the emotional lacerations anticipated; the report from the doctor's examination that all is well, when one was sure that the physical picture was very serious indeed. All of these surprises are glad!

There is a deeper meaning in the concept of the glad surprise. This meaning has to do with the very ground and foundation of hope about the nature of life itself. The manifestation of this quality in the world about us can best be witnessed in the coming of spring. It is ever a new thing, a glad surprise, the stirring of life at the end of winter. One day there seems to be no sign of life and then almost overnight, swelling buds, delicate blooms, blades of grass, bugs, insects —an entire world of newness everywhere. It is the glad surprise at the end of winter. Often the same experience comes at the end of a long tunnel of tragedy and tribulation. It is as if a man stumbling in the darkness, having lost his way, finds that the spot at which he falls is the foot of a stairway that leads

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FENCES

...barriers of reason.

By A. Friend

Granted social mores and cultural preferences change and we learn to adjust, but reason holds to a standard that adds confidence regarding our longevity as a heterogeneous community.

Rights are given and taken by laws, some expose *sub-rosa* motives, others resolve dreadful issues.

As to the dilemma of human nature we have learned recently that even royals have fences... barriers. So where does this leave us *mere* mortals?

If there is a dilemma, it is that relative truths are tools in a nation of diverse views. Depends how you absorb information; and how you embrace content.

Accept that people believe what they already know. In Skinner's sense: a response to environment... kinda like that!

As in recent years when a plethora of disinformation infected our awareness, generating polar realities, it seemed more a game in a brutal assault, a camouflaged goal, financed by who knows whom? Backroom agendas; front door issues.

There's no hiding from the fact we have built mental fences. Have we become a nation powered by an emotional climax, a separation of logic and reason, as a device for fundraising, in process encouraging a government of divisions, based on self-seeking benefits?

This is a good time to sober and to find voice. Reason calls for arbitration, a fence cutter designed to reinforce growth and to defend principles, some of which go beyond reason, as others osmose into community issues. Emotional hurdles –fences-- block growth, a defense as reason inviting false conclusions, that validate how we think.

One approach is to consider an *experience shared* where we become more aware, more mindful of our spirit as we recognize and verbalize them. Better to be mindful of oneself, not swayed by conflict driven rhetoric.

Beware *fear appeal* a strategy for motivating people to take a particular action, endorse a particular policy, or buy a particular product, by affecting anxiety.

Consider “sharing” as a helpful tool, a phenomenon that promotes the tendency to recount and portion emotional experiences with others. Friendship is an instrument for opening sentiments encouraging wellbeing. Love and respect offer healing emotions.

Granted societies have rules, so choose friends wisely! Understand people possess an inherent basic belief about themselves, what is referred to as a [*symbolic universe*](#) which seems space age filled with illusional magic.

Are you willing to cut through the mental barrier that separates us from them? Love may not heal all wounds, but proves a good band-aide for cleaning wounds! Affection offers hope. As complex and naive as it may seem, love of country with a bit of luck lowers partisan temperatures, and saves us from indifference. What do you think?

WRITE ME at A. Friend at spokanefriends@gmail.com

Next Month: Racism

Howard Thurman (continued from page 2)

from darkness into light. Such is the glad surprise. This is what Easter means in the experience of the race. This is the resurrection! It is the announcement that life cannot ultimately be conquered by death, that there is no road that is at last swallowed up in an ultimate darkness, that there is strength added when the labors increase, that multiplied, peace matches multiplied trials, that life is bottomed by the glad surprise. Take courage, therefore:

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

~ from *For the Inward Journey*, pages 266-67 ~



Caritas Stats for February 2020

Individuals served	432
Households served	333
Children (0-18)	97
Adults (18-54)	210
Seniors (55 & over)	125
Lbs. of food through the Table of Plenty & Food Pantry	21,710
Hygiene & Cleaning Supplies	\$ 165.50
Holiday Heat and Utilities	\$ 1,372.71
Number of Volunteers	52
Volunteer Hours	765



Caritas Needs

<u>Food:</u>	Cereal	Syrup
<u>Necessities:</u>	Laundry Soap	Shampoo

Update 1

We are on course to have the new building cleared by April 1st. That will give us two months to make needed repairs and adjustments and move before June 1st! We are very grateful to Spokane Friends Church for their many years as amazing hosts and want to be respectful of our committed timeline so they can have their classroom space back. Keep your eye out for a deep clean day at the end of May so we can honor the building we have called home since 2013.

Update 2

We are very excited for this opportunity to expand our food storage and client capacity. In-line with that goal, the Caritas Board is taking advantage of some capacity grant funding to obtain a walk-in cooler/freezer to better accommodate the volume of refrigerated and frozen product we have struggled to find room for. This is both a blessing and a lot of work! We will be verifying the building's floor support and working with an electrician for safe power connection(s). This will free up our existing units for clients to select food from and minimize our need for icepacks and insulated food bins. We'll be saving on energy costs AND improving food safety by keeping product in a temperature controlled environment.

So, (if you are wondering what to do with your government stimulus checks), we would be so appreciative of your financial support to help us move and improve. Thank you for your prayers during this time of transition and we will keep you updated throughout the process!

"May your neighbors respect you, trouble neglect you, angels protect you, and heaven accept you.

~ An Irish Blessing

Kelsie Rowland
Operations Manager
Caritas Outreach Ministries

♥ *Caring for neighbors in need through your generosity*

Quaker News

- ⇒ **North Seattle Friends Church**, a welcoming and inclusive Friends Meeting (Quaker), is seeking a full-time pastor, starting in Summer 2021. We seek a pastor who will give leadership to our Meeting's desire to support one another's lives and ministries, be active in living out God's love in the community around us, and be a center of Quaker thought and practice. For more information, go to northseattlefriends.org
- ⇒ Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) invites you to read this statement against anti-Asian violence at <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-03/stop-violence-against-asian-americans>
- ⇒ The proceeds from Northwest Yearly Meeting's Easter Offering this year will go to support EFM's ministries in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Haiti, Hungary, India, Ireland, Mexico, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, and Thailand.
- ⇒ Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends **Annual Sessions** are scheduled for Friday to Sunday, June 18-20, 2021, and they are tentatively planning on meeting in person at Canby Grove.
- ⇒ Northwest Yearly Meeting's **Annual Sessions** will take place July 18-21. No further information is available at this time.
- ⇒ The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in New York is hiring for the position of Quaker UN Representative to join its representation team to the United Nations. This position functions as a senior member of the QUNO team, sharing program responsibilities while taking particular care for the operations of the office.
- ⇒ First Friends Meeting in Richmond, Indiana, is calling for applications for the position of pastor from a spiritually mature person ready to lead a congregation of about one hundred Quakers. The ideal pastor should be a member of a Quaker congregation, have a degree from a recognized seminary, and have experience working with groups who hold a wide variety of beliefs.

Financial Report

Income for March 2021: \$5872.05

Expenses for March 2021: \$5194.63

Sunday Schedule

Apr 4 Deborah Sues

Apr 11 Pat Shemorry