

SPOKANEWORD

June 2022



Spokane Friends

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Sunday Schedule

Traditional worship in stillness
begins at 9:00 a.m.
when first person sits down
Programmed worship 10:00 a.m.
In-Person (masked)
and Via Zoom
See Website For Link

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

Signs and Wonders

by Johan Maurer

[Note: Last month Johan Maurer gave a message entitled “Signs and Wonders” during Sunday worship at Spokane Friends. The complete message can be found on our website, but it was too long to appear here, so this shortened version speaks directly to the current conflict between Russian and Ukraine.]

I often need to be reminded in time of war that the antics of us vertical mammals on earth, posturing, marking our territories, mobilizing our kinfolk, all dressed in impressive uniforms, those things aren’t all there is of creation. As I keep trying to find ways to say, countries and borders are all in our heads. They depend for their existence on convincing us of their coercive reality. The Lamb’s War that early Quakers proclaimed involves decolonizing our brains so that we turn our attention, and the world’s attention, to our true identities, children of a loving Creator who are learning how to live with God at the center of our lives, and telling each other what we’re learning. Every Sunday, and every day, that we spend time learning about life with God at the center, and learning how to resist the systems that don’t want us to live that way, that’s another day we come closer to going back through the flaming sword, as George Fox said, into the Paradise of God. Living that way in our meetings and churches, in full public view, is a sign and a wonder.

Joel 2:28-31, proclaimed by the apostle Peter on Pentecost, in Acts, chapter two:

“And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

Acts 2:42-43

They [that is, those gathered by Peter’s proclamation on Pentecost] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

[Signs and wonders were present when Jesus and his disciples traveled the countryside in Biblical times, but can we really expect to see them in our day and age?] . . . I do not want to shrink the menu for signs and wonders. Just the opposite. Right now is not the time to reduce expectations for God’s intervention through God’s faithful people, **including the people right here in this meeting for worship.** [Emphasis mine] We are in the midst of a scary cluster of crises. One of them, and the one that has been weighing on me the most, is the growing popularity of authoritarianism combined with nationalism, racism, and the romance of violence: a combination that we have often called fascism. In fact, this is how I classify Russia’s attack on Ukraine, despite Putin’s claim that he is fighting fascism.

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You will never hear me arguing that supernatural signs and wonders don't happen--I know they do. Judy and I have some stories to tell, some from our years in Russia, and maybe another time we can get to those. But my argument for this morning is that the Friends testimonies, the ways we understand discipleship, are themselves powerful signs and wonders and are needed at this precise moment when conventional wisdom surrounding us seems to say that you can only fight violence with violence.

Maybe the word "testimony"--for example, the "peace testimony"--seems too tame to convey the full sense of a sign and a wonder. But the peace testimony--that is, the testimony of a life lived in obedience to the Prince of Peace, defying the massive historical reliance of peoples and nations everywhere on violence--is to me *a confirming sign of the reality of the Gospel. We don't practice nonviolence just because we're nice people or clever people, nor do we practice it because we don't believe evil should be resisted. I'm passionate about upholding this testimony because it is evidence that we've put our trust in the promises of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. We have not become Christians to make our lives convenient for the powers of this world, but to keep company with Jesus and with all those who believe what he says.*

To tell you the truth, I'm a bit discouraged by the options we're presented right now as we watch what's going on in Ukraine. Our country is one of many engaged in shipping huge amounts of weapons and ammunition into Ukraine, all designed to destroy Russian forces and seize back territory now occupied by those Russians. At the same time, we've imposed an economic blockade on Russia that is likely to hurt ordinary people, like our own friends and former students there, more than it will affect the Russian elites.

The opposite approach seems no less repellent: watching from a safe distance as a whole country is sliced up, and perhaps extinguished altogether, abandoned by all its allies and neighbors so that the aggressor can pursue a genocidal agenda, while the rest of the world continues to help fund the aggression through all the routine ties of trade that have enriched global elites--while allowing, of course, politicians and church leaders to bemoan the aggression and call for ceasefires.

Conventional peacemakers seem limited to making minor adjustments to this unappetizing menu. Maybe we should send weapons of limited range, or only money, or only humanitarian supplies. Maybe the aggressor would feel more kindly toward us if we criticize NATO more or talk about our own undoubted sins. After all, the USA has plenty of experience invading countries. Or maybe we should embrace nonviolence totally and either advocate surrender to the Russian forces, knowing full well what that means, based on decades of experience with Russian military occupations, or at the other extreme, advocate escalation that could of course spiral out of control.

Does peacemaking rooted in Quaker faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, have anything different to offer? How can our churches and meetings show the signs and wonders of a Holy-Spirit-grounded peace testimony?

First of all, I personally want to resign from any attempt to advise the Pentagon or the Kremlin. Why should I pretend to know which of their awful alternatives are the best? However, I reserve the right to challenge their propaganda. To my own microscopic best abilities, I'm going to challenge Russophobia wherever I see it, and I'm going to challenge Putin's fascist mythologies just as vigorously. Truth really does matter.

But I'm not alone. There are others in our meetings and churches who are far more competent than I am at recommending and lobbying for policy alternatives. For example, I'm personally very dubious about the Ukraine-related policy recommendations of the Friends Committee on National Legislation, but I want them to keep making those recommendations and stay in the conversation. Let's argue and debate and research, and support each other in doing all this, remembering that when we work together in this way, as messy as it is, we're showing the world a laboratory and an observatory of love, where conflict and diversity are not the end of the world.

Secondly, together we remember that all of these angry and warring people, and all of their actions, are trapped in systems and structures that need to be confronted. Every Russian and every Ukrainian is a child of God, made in God's image and likeness, just as we are, and anything that blocks this identity needs to be challenged. To me, this means that, in our church's diverse community, the evangelist is as important as the prophet. Evangelism doesn't just mean proclamation--there is an evangelistic component any time we take risks for peace, counsel conscientious objectors, confront lies, don't pay war taxes, travel to the places where war threatens, and even simply correct misinformation.

Finally, this is a time when the peacemakers in the war zone must be feeling isolated. In fact, impressive resources--police and technology, both--are going into the effort to keep them isolated. I'm trying to stay in touch with those I know--some Christian, some secular--based on our time in those countries, even though I have to be careful not to create even more hazards for them. Some of them are still in their own countries, and others are refugees. If we envision the church as a laboratory of love and an observatory of truth, let's find ways to include these partners and potential partners in our networks, whether by prayer or by direct contact, or both.

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MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES 15 May 2022



The meeting was opened by Presiding Clerk, Jonas Cox. 17 people were in attendance.

The minutes of the April meeting **were read and approved** with one correction. FAN is Faith Action Network not Friends Action Network.

Treasurer's Report: The money that had been with Friends Foundation has been transferred to our checking account. The meeting with Everance went well and we would like approval to move \$30,000 to their money market fund. Minimal interest at this time but no risk. This was **approved by the meeting.**

Stewards and Trustees: No report

Elders' Report: Speakers have been considered. Ruthie Tippin will be added to our monthly schedule. We plan to have a new member celebration in June. Our 501c3 application was filed 8 months ago, and we are wondering about the progress. Tina Weaver agreed to be an Emergency contact for the church when the secretary is not available. The worship leader for June is Charlene Cox. We would like to add a new sentence to our Mission Statement that we will be an "Open and Affirming" church. Prayer and discussion were held. Several people spoke including member Linda Nixon who objects and opposes to putting this in our statement and literature, and is not willing to stand aside for this to be approved. Jonas Cox, the clerk, asked those at the meeting how they felt and they decided to **approve this addition.** The Pride Parade is Saturday, June 11th and Lois Kieffaber withdrew her request to have a Spokane Friends banner during that parade.

Old Business: The church is still trying to possibly come up with a Land Acknowledgement Statement regarding our church being built on native American land that was taken from the Spokane Tribes of Indians years ago. Lois Kieffaber withdrew the request she had made.

With no other New or Old business and hearts and minds were clear, Krista Maroni dismissed us in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Nixon, Recording Clerk

Family Trip Leads to New Information About Quaker Connections

by Nancy Street

In the first week of May, we visited Cornell University and enjoyed hearing our granddaughter's defense of her research project.

After hearing about various research projects, we took a tour around the sprawling campus of Cornell University conducted by my granddaughter's professor of history; we heard some wonderful amazing "firsts" that the university could claim. The establishment of this Ivy League university in 1865 (end of the Civil War) was unlike other Ivy League schools in that no slavery, research on slaves, or profits from slavery were involved.

Cornell was a leader in promoting subjects other than the classics, which was unusual for the day. Science, agriculture, engineering and other practical subjects were offered, reflecting their Land Grant connections.

To expand the concept of diversity, inclusion and equality, the university welcomed women and also students of various religions. The acreage of the campus was donated by Ezra Cornell, which stands on land occupied previously by his farm. There is a large botanical garden as well.

Undergraduate enrollment is limited to 15,000 and graduate enrollment to 10,000. We were informed by our granddaughter that over half of the 10,000 undergraduates are non-white and about half are vegetarian.

There are many well-known alumni: Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Carl Sagan, Christopher Reeves, and many others including Billionaire Robert Smith, who funded the engineering building to the tune of 150 million dollars. (He is known for his generous donations to students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities)

Since our family has connections with Quakers (See John Street House in Wikipedia) and we often discover that they were involved in working towards important milestones of our country, I asked our guide what was Ezra Cornell's faith tradition. We were not surprised, but certainly pleased to learn that he was a birthright Quaker. Quakers have been involved in most of the great advancements throughout history, such as women's right to vote, abolition of slavery, establishing mental hospitals, and working for peace.

Although I have visited and worked at many universities. Cornell is exceptional. I urge readers to visit Ithaca to see for yourself this groundbreaking institution, or easier still, research the university online.

Just a footnote: Our granddaughter, Anuli Ononye, is the first black female president of the Cornell Student Body and will join CNN starting in September.

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I want to end with a story about our peace testimony as a sign and wonder. This comes from a draft counseling ministry in Russia, whom we supported during our years on the Friends House Moscow board, and who are still working today.

A young married man is telling how he would have been press-ganged into the army but for the intervention of the counselors that we supported. (Some details have been obscured for privacy's sake.) He told us that the day began with an apparently routine request from the local bureaucracy:

—they called me to the prosecutor's office to hand in copies of documents (my driver's license and identity card). After the copies were made, men from the Army Recruiting Office came and forcibly put me into a car and took me off to the clinic to take x-rays. Then they took me to the Recruiting Office and from there sent me to [the city].

...the senior commander L. handed me an army identity card and announced that tomorrow I would be sent off to the army. I couldn't believe what was happening. That morning, leaving the house, I had said to my pregnant wife that I wouldn't be long, but now all my thoughts were turned upside down.

I shouted at L, demanding to know how it was possible to take someone into the army without a call-up commission and call-up paper? He did not answer...

I spent that night in the barracks...At 14.00 they took me out under guard to meet the military unit to which I was assigned. The commander of the unit gave me half an hour to say goodbye to my relatives, and when I returned I would have to change into military uniform and have my head shaved.

At the Draft Checkpoint I saw my brother and mother. We just sat in silence, because we didn't see any way out of the situation. My wife rang my brother and said that she had found the telephone number of some people who would be able to help us. These people were [Friends-supported draft counselors] Nina and Herman.

I immediately rang that number, briefly explained the situation and 15 minutes later we were already writing a notice of appeal to the Draft Commission ... together with Nina and Herman.

I was filled with emotion, I trusted these people completely, and have not regretted this for a moment. Nina firmly defended my rights in the office of the deputy of the Army Recruiting Office G. He was unable in any way to justify the actions of his colleagues and gave in and let me go. I couldn't believe that such a thing was possible!

Five minutes later we were outside the Draft Checkpoint! I was full of joy and could not believe what had happened. I rang my wife, said that I was definitely coming that day! I was overcome with emotion!

All the words of thanks could not express my gratitude.

*Spokane Friends got to know Johan Maurer and his wife Judy Maurer from their regular visits to us during their Quaker service in Russia, 2007-17. They are members of Camas Friends Church (Camas, Washington) and of Moscow Friends Meeting (Russia). They are recorded ministers in Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. Johan blogs weekly at blog.canyoubelieve.me.***

***Reference: <https://blog.canyoubelieve.me/2022/05/>*

Sunday Morning Speakers

June 5 Sarah Scott
June 12 Tim Jackson
June 19 Jon Maroni
June 26 Johan Maurer



Spokane Friends Meeting has happily returned to our pre-COVID schedule of A community potluck every first Sunday of the month, as well as Monthly Meeting for Business on the third Sunday.

A Note From Caritas



To our Supporting Churches,

Caritas is celebrating our **one-year anniversary in our new** building, as well as 30 years serving the Spokane community!

We are so thankful for your support and prayers lifting up this ministry to bless our neighbors in need.

As we plan for our future, we see rising client numbers. Last year by May of 2021, Caritas had served 2,000 individuals, but in May 2022 we have welcomed over 5,000!

Since you, our family in Christ, are an integral part of Caritas, we are actively seeking your input in our long range planning. We are committed to meeting the needs at our door!

Caritas Board Member, Bob Walker, will be reaching out to you in the coming weeks to help us develop concrete goals that serve our community and honor our mission.

Please pray for us as we critically look at the stewardship of God's provision.

Calling all Crafters !

The next major Fundraiser for Caritas will occur in October. That may seem far away, but some people will already be thinking about Christmas gifts, and others of us need plenty of time to prepare our wares for a **PARKING LOT SALE**. The cost to you will be only \$10 per stall/table.

But wait — there's more! You may also want to register for a table if you are busy downsizing at your home and have second-hand goods to offer for sale. Or you might use this as an opportunity to start cleaning out your garage. Either way you will be helping a worthy charity while keeping all proceeds from your own sales.

Often people learn about craft sales too late to properly prepare for it, so now you know in plenty of time to take advantage of this one.

For more information call Caritas at 509-326-2249 or watch this space in upcoming Newsletters.



FAITH ACTION NETWORK

A Partnership for the Common Good

2022 SPRING SUMMIT Eastern Washington Region



Sunday, June 12, 2:00 - 4:00 pm
St. John's Episcopal Cathedral
127 E 12Th Avenue, Spokane

We meet to celebrate FAN's wins in the past year and consider what steps we might take together in the year ahead, based on common concerns of our faith communities.. You can attend in person or via Zoom. Register at <https://fanwa.org/regional-spring-summits/>

Quaker News

SUMMER IS QUAKER YEARLY MEETING TIME

- ⇒ Sierra-Cascade Yearly Meeting of Friends is looking forward to their in-person **Annual Sessions at Canby Grove Christian Center** near Canby, Oregon on June 17-19, 2022. To learn more, see <https://www.scymfriends.org/annual-conference>
- ⇒ North Pacific Yearly Meeting has created a draft Minute of Right Relationship with Indigenous People for consideration at their Annual Sessions July 13–17, 2022 at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, OR. You can find this Minute at <https://www.npym.org/>. Sierra-Cascades YM is collaborating in creating this Minute.
- ⇒ **Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends** is excited to hold this year's Annual Sessions at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. After two years of online only Annual Sessions, this year the conference will be offered as a hybrid. Get more information at nwfriends.org; registration starts in June.
- ⇒ The 2022 Gathering of Friends General Conference will be held **online** July 3rd through 9th, 2022. Registration for the virtual Gathering will open in May.

OTHER NEWS

- ⇒ **FCNL is hiring for a number of positions** which are listed below. More information about each is available at <https://www.fcnl.org/about/work-fcnl>
The Head of Policy and Advocacy is responsible for integrating and growing all aspects of FCNL's lobbying by staff and volunteers in Washington and around the country.
The Organizing Data Associate has strong data-analytic skills to track the expansion of our lobbying across multiple initiatives, organize the scheduling of training and lobbying for two major events, and develop tools to move digital advocates into off-line lobbying.
Also open at FCNL are positions of **Staff Accountant and Facilities Manager**, as well as many opportunities for volunteers.

Two Quotes by Rumi

When the world pushes you to your knees, you're in the perfect position to pray."

"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."