

SPOKANENWORD

July

2023



Spokane Friends

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Following the teachings of the Living Christ, we are an open, loving, and affirming community. We believe that God's Light is inherent within all people. There are no exceptions.

Sunday Schedule

Traditional worship in stillness
begins at 8:45 a.m. or
when first person sits down
Programmed worship 10:00 a.m.
In-Person and Via Zoom
See Website For Link

First Sunday of the Month
Potluck Meal at rise of worship

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

WHAT'S REAL; WHAT'S NOT?

Artificial Intelligence Considered

by Walter Simon

It's too early to accept the benefits of artificial intelligence (A.I.). According to the New York Times* concern is reasonable: "jobs will surely be affected by world-changing technology." However, "...how and why is still unclear". Think tanks are exploring the potential of "unexpected behavior".

Contemporary development of A.I. is an international issue that concerns civil coexistence and is an existential risk to our humanity. Mary Shelly in 1818 gave warning when her fiction brought Dr. Frankenstein's monster to life -- that is to be careful of what we create.

If survival issues prove mountains to climb, faith hopefully offers hope, seeking compassion for future prospects in a complex world. Consider the possibility that machines may strike out, develop bad habits, and fail to synthesize compassion with mechanics.

Are we on the edge of embracing artificial intelligence? It's potentially great for movie production and medical analysis, but will it consider other present common concerns, especially when it comes to our longevity? Are big changes coming? Ponder future days when a machine defines and dictates the "how and why" of life's planetary issues. How will other countries use A.I. reasoning as an interactive tool to endorse diverse political philosophies?

We are a community of bright and sensitive folk, with a fueled interactive exchange of issues, searching thoughts, suggesting an uplifting exchange that allows for ardent concerns and reasonable resolution, some of which that represent Spokane Friends.

It's important: values are essential and should help guide and heal a queasy nation, stoked by recent headline news, and oh yes, outrageous scam potential. Are fears of A.I. warranted?

We are a country of cultural fractions, some justify violent solutions, others cling to an unusual philosophy to validate prejudice, yet others are off-duty citizens who snake the aisles of sanctioned "drug stores" to filter reality on weekend journeys.

Given: reality is what happens! Herein a thought: America is divided into tribes, faiths, and institutions, resulting in over-exercised aspects of free speech. Guns are a pronounced threat, murder a casual news event, and civic growth a potential threat to our region, generating economic issues that cause anxiety and determine lifestyles.

One way to express sincere anxiety is through this newsletter, your voice. We are moving into a new age of science. It's impossible at this writing to fully speculate on the effect of A.I. on our way of life. What we do know is that our thoughts are a vital part of our community's compassionate distinctions and **they should be shared, both internally and with the external world.**

Lamentable as it seems, consider future days when a machine defines and dictates social function? Stephen Hawking in 2016, addressing A.I., noted "it could be the biggest event in the history of civilization", but added "it could also be the last," suggesting the need to learn how to avoid its accompanying risks."

For example, do we know how to ask the right questions of AI? Suppose we ask that all humans alive have an equal share of the necessities of life. Might AI decide that removing all Americans might be a good solution, since they (continued on next page)

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Will programmed logic's rationality be able to interact with human compassion as it plans the future of human life? Our present manifestation of human intelligence -- images flowing from brain to mouth to words -- produces creativity and perceptions which we hope can lead to a thoughtful way of life. Perhaps a machine can do it better; witness today's political rhetoric which answers questions that were not asked rather than answering the questions asked.

It's difficult to know what to believe about our future! However, it's eminently better to believe in yourself and the prospects of your offspring than to generate an artificial focus to trust in. Pet, don't clutch, your mouse.

June 9, 2023 "Late Night Thoughts."

*June 11, 2023, page 5

Historic Quotes which come up during Fourth of July celebrations



I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong.

-- President George Washington

True patriotism hates injustice in its own land more than anywhere else."
— Clarence Darrow

I'd like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free and
wanted other people to be also free. —Rosa Parks

*For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances
the freedom of others" — Nelson Mandela*

The fact is, with every friendship you make and every bond you establish, you are shaping
the image of America projected to the rest of the world" — Michelle Obama

A Gift for the Office!

Stop by and see the new copy machine!

It is smaller than our previous one, but has many more useful functions which will make office work more efficient. It was donated to us by our Muslim friend Yousif, who also gave us our last one also, thanks to Kent Biels' friendship with him.



Upcoming Speakers

July 9 John Kinney

July 16 Ruthie Tippin

July 23 Johan Maurer

July 30 Jonathan Williams



Love, Romance, and Loss *How Pam Received My Vote*

I didn't know it was supposed to be this way; flushed, hot, sweaty, immobile. I didn't know what to do. It lasted less than a moment. Sitting in the study-hall, doing my homework and she sits across the table from me, writing "Vote for Pam" on pin-on buttons, running for 8th grade class president.

Pam tossed a button across the table to me and as I reached for it our eyes met, locked tight on each other and we stayed that way for endless seconds. It seemed like forever: long brown hair falling about her shoulders, and I, clumsy and gawky, geek, country bumpkin. Our paths were never meant to cross. She, popular and accepted in all the right circles and I, not part of that crowd. But oh, those eyes, those blue, blue eyes! I will never forget what it felt like to see a woman for the first time.

© Robert I. Wiese
Life Well-Lived, 2015

MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES.
11 June 2023



The meeting was called to order by Laverne Biel with thoughts on children's church and the challenges of focus, followed by prayer. Thirteen people were present.

The minutes were read and approved as presented.

Treasurers Report: Jon Maroni presented the report. Our financial status is better than this time last year. Report was approved as presented.

Elders: Krista Maroni reported that the speakers were discussed. There are open dates due to summer plans and these times are being filled.

A class was discussed, such as Quakerism 101, for those who are interested. This was approved.

Charlene Cox's term as Elder has ended and the position needs to be filled. The Nominating Committee also needs to be filled.

There were questions about the hiring process for a pastor. The position is one of chaplaincy rather than preaching. There will be an invitation to submit a resume and references. The position will be listed on the website, with a prior mailing to members for their help in recruiting candidates.

Elders are creating a plan to invite for and interview anyone who meets the requirements and inviting them for an interview.

There was additional discussion of our expectations.

Stewards: No report. However Laverne did note several things that need attention, such as cleaning or replacing the carpet in the nursery downstairs.

Walter Simon is educating himself on our nonprofit status. He continues to research possible institutions to apply to for funds. (He has identified 5-6 opportunities). Laverne expressed thanks for the time and effort put in on this.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Bob Wiese.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Keehnen,

Recording Clerk

Caritas Needs This Week

Food:

Boxed meals
Canned meats
Pancake mix
Cereal
Jam/Jelly
Chili

Necessities:

Laundry Detergent
Can openers
Cleaning supplies

Dish soap
Toothpaste



Volunteer Needed: Mondays, 8:15 - 10ish, to unload groceries.
Must be able to lift up to 40 lbs.

Are you having a yard sale or selling your car/boat? Please consider donating some or all of your proceeds to your neighborhood food bank.

And thank you so much for your continuing generosity to Caritas.

More Caritas News

For January through April 2023, Caritas Food Bank served

5,735 individuals from 2094 households

Children (0-18)	1,793
Adults (18-54)	2,741
Seniors (55 & over)	1,201

and . . .

84 volunteers put in 4,237 hours of service.
141,075 lbs of food was distributed through Caritas's Food Bank.

Caritas always has a need for hygiene and cleaning supplies.

We continue to help our clients with utilities.

MONETARY DONATIONS

Money is ALWAYS needed for Caritas to purchase needed foods, utility expenses, gas vouchers and bus passes to help our clients.



Umatilla's Owl Man Is Bringing Burrowing Owls Back From The Brink

By Ian McCluskey, Oregon Public Broadcasting, Umatilla, OR

A decommissioned chemical weapons depot and a lone biologist might be the last hope for a population of burrowing owls.

If it were up to David H. Johnson, he'd be out of the burrow-making business. Instead, he stands on a wind-swept prairie, shovel in hand. He wipes the sweat from his brow and surveys the

sagebrush as it stretches across the rolling hills. This wide-open stretch of sage and sand and shrubs was once riddled with burrows. For millennia, animals like badgers and prairie dogs pockmarked the Columbia River plateau with burrows.

Johnson has been watching those burrows disappear, one by one. And now, as he stomps his spade into the sand, he knows that there is not a single natural burrow left. He knows because he's counted and tracked them for years.

The only burrows around here are the ones he's installed himself, one at a time. Johnson builds his burrows out of plastic barrels, five-gallon buckets, wire mesh and irrigation tubes. They don't look like much — sort of a backyard DIY project. And when he buries his buckets in the ground, they look like just holes in the ground. But these burrows made of buckets are the last hope for a small population of owls. Burrowing owls are disappearing across North America at a rate of 2 to 3 percent each year.



There is probably no one who knows as much or cares as much for these small little owls as David H. Johnson. Johnson has devoted his life to researching and advocating for owls. After 41 years in the field, he's the director of the Global Owl Project. His expertise is called on internationally.

One of the most significant calls came from an unexpected place — the Umatilla Chemical Depot. Since its construction in World War II, the Army base had been a top-security, off-limits stretch of sagebrush surrounded by barbed wire. It contains row on row of massive concrete bunkers. that once stockpiled America's deadliest chemical weapons. Today, all of the 999 bunkers are empty except for one. Johnson uses this as his workshop.

Hard To Recover From Zero

The Umatilla Chemical Depot called Johnson about a decade ago. Employees there had noticed that the burrowing owls had all but vanished.

"When I came to the depot to work on the burrowing owl project, there were three or four pairs and we knew this was the last of them," Johnson recounts. "And it's really hard to recover from zero. So then the question is: what do you do?"

Johnson discovered that the problem was a lack of burrows. Burrowing owls don't dig burrows. In fact, owls in general do not build nests. Rather, they borrow.

In the prairie, where there are no trees to perch in, these little owls adapted to what was once available and plentiful: thousands of burrows left by badgers and prairie dogs and the like.

But as the populations of these animals were wiped out or displaced by human development, the burrows they once dug began to disappear. When the natural burrows began to disappear, so did the little owls that depended upon them.

"Not enough nest holes, no reproduction. Boom, they decline," Johnson explains. "So we put in artificial burrows to rescue that."

Now, Johnson has created 182 artificial

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After nine years working on the depot, Johnson has brought the population of burrowing owls back from the brink. This year he captured 96 adults and banded 172 babies owls.

"We've found that if you want to use artificial burrows, it works," he concludes, but then poses the larger question: "Do you want to run artificial burrows for a hundred years?"

Then Johnson muses: "But if I had my way, there'd be a return of burrowing mammals like badgers, lots of natural burrows. And I'd be out of the burrow-making business."

Ref: <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-burrowing-owls-umatilla-chemical-depot-conservation/>
(Jan. 2, 2019 11:45 a.m.)



Quaker News

- ⇒ **Friends General Conference** will hold its annual sessions at Western Oregon University July 2 - 9, 2023.
- ⇒ **Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends** will hold its annual sessions at George Fox University on July 23-27, 2023.
- ⇒ **World Quaker Day** for 2023 is Sunday, Oct. 1. This is an annual event where we celebrate the diversity of Quakerism around the world and build connections to make our community stronger. This year's theme is "Living the spirit of ubuntu: Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation -- and one another."
- ⇒ **Pendle Hill** is advertising for an **Events Coordinator** who oversees use of space at Pendle Hill and is a key position for cooperation across departments. The conference booking process includes all aspects of meeting coordination from initial contact through invoicing and collection \$50,000 – \$55,000. For more info, see <https://pendlehill.org/explore/employment/events-coordinator/>
- ⇒ **Friends Meeting of Washington (DC)** is hiring an **Events Associate**, a new part- to full-time position created in response to the increasing demand for event space rentals.
- ⇒ **American Friends Service Committee** is advertising 30 jobs from volunteers to interns (\$20/hr) to top dogs (Associate Regional Director, West Region at \$81-98K). For more info, go to "American Friends Service Committee jobs" in your browser.
- ⇒ **FCNL** is advertising for a **e FCNL Georgia** also have many volunteer opportunity for young adults. More information is available at <https://www.fcnl.org/about/work-fcnl>
- ⇒ **Friends United Meeting** is seeking a full-time **Advancement Director** who will guiding fundraising strategies in North America to support our mission and global ministries. See FUM E-News for May 31, 2023.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

As noted in this month's Monthly Business Meeting Minutes, Spokane Friends is now advertising for a part-time pastor/chaplain. Please go to our website at spokanefriends.com to see the job description, and then if you know someone you think might be a good fit for us, please refer them to our website.

THANK YOU !!

The Antisocial Network

When leading a workshop on fake news, Church of the Brethren *Messenger* editor Wendy McFadden mentioned the tactics of Cambridge Analytics and warned participants not to take any of those quizzes on Facebook.

Many listeners were shocked because those quizzes seem like harmless fun. Who wouldn't want to learn more about their psychological traits.

In late 2016 Cambridge Analytics started to make news for its shadow marketing to individuals. From just a few data points, the company was able to extrapolate a lot of information leading to "dark posts", online ads to manipulate the recipient.

Facebook knows what you searched for on the Internet and how long your phone conversations were. It knows everything you've told it, everything your friends have told it, and everything you didn't tell it directly but unwittingly allowed it to know. Using Facebook is free, which means the valuable product being sold is US.

We know now that virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa listen to us. Just last month Amazon was accused of violating children's privacy by keeping sensitive voice and geolocation data for years, and using it for its own purposes,

McFadden recommends that we be "wise as serpents" in using social media.

I Beg Your Forgiveness

by Eden Grace

[Eden Grace wrote this in response to a message about the importance of confession and repentance, and how healing it can be to confess not only our personal sins but the sins of our people.]

I think many people here [attending a Yearly Meeting] carry deep wounds from damaging religious experience in our past. I know I do. Those wounds may be closed over, but for many of us I think there's still some shrapnel trapped inside. Sometimes when we talk to each other as a community and we seek God's will together, those wounds become activated. That shrapnel causes a new sharp pain. An old wound can become a new pain or a reminder of pain. I know that happens for me, and I believe that many of us have experienced religious trauma in our past that becomes a factor, an obstacle, or just something that we bring into this room together.

Taking the challenge . . . that I felt God calling me to embrace, I want to confess to you the sins of my people. Who are my people? I identify as a born-again Christian standing in the evangelical theological tradition, and I want to speak to you today as a Christian and on behalf of my Christian people. Whether I agree with them or not, whether I have done any of these things personally or not, doesn't matter, because these are my people and if I choose to stand in the river of faith and identify with it, then I bear the sins of my people as a personal responsibility.

Therefore, on behalf of myself and my people, I confess that we have done terrible damage in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On behalf of myself and my people, I confess that we have denied the full humanity and spiritual gifts of those who are different, that we have used the loving and liberating word of God as a weapon. On behalf of myself and my people, I confess that we have claimed that some people are not worthy to be used by God in faithful service. I confess that we have behaved as if some sins are graver than others and some biblical texts are more rigidly applied, bringing hypocrisy and inconsistency to our own biblical scholarship.

On behalf of myself and my people, I confess that we have hijacked the symbols and texts of Christian faith and drastically narrowed their meaning. I confess that we have used violence in the name of the Prince of Peace. We have accused those who read the Bible differently than we do of not being loyal and obedient believers, or of not loving the Bible as much as we do. I confess on behalf of myself and my people that we have cared more for spiritual and otherworldly salvation than for justice and suffering and liberation from oppression. We have been consumed by our fear of how we might be contaminated by our fellowship with you. We have arrogantly believed that we have a full and complete understanding of the will of God and the proper application of the Bible in every context.

We have been judgmental, uncompromising, harsh, and uncharitable. I confess that we have desecrated the name of Jesus by acting in ways of which He would be ashamed. I'm so sorry. I humbly repent and beg your forgiveness. In these and so many other ways, Christians, people who love Jesus, have presented a counter-witness. We have pushed people away from God, from the love and the liberation of God, instead of drawing them closer.

On behalf of myself and my people, I beg your forgiveness.

Eden Grace is well-known throughout Friends United Meeting (FUM) and was a member of the World Council of Churches central committee. She held a Masters of Divinity from Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA, and a certificate in International Mission and Ecumenism from the Boston Theological Institute. She and her family served several years in Kenya, working with church leaders to establish an Africa Ministries Office of FUM. The article on the front page is excerpted from the December 2011 issue of Friends Journal. She died on 27 May 2023.



On Consensus

It is rooted in our deepest theological affirmations, and is one of our highest spiritual experiences. Our bold affirmation is that God does indeed have a will for us, that God is actively trying to communicate that will, and that we are capable, through corporate prayer, to discover that will.

—Eden Grace, in speaking to the World Council of Churches
on the consensus process among the Society of Friends.