

SPOKANEWORD

January
2026



Spokane Friends

1612 W Dalke

Spokane, WA 99205

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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 8:30 a.m. or
when first person sits down

Gathering worship 10:00 a.m.
In-Person and Via Zoom
See Website For Link

INUUC Worship Service 11:30 am

First Sunday of the Month
Potluck Meal at rise of worship

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

Last Sunday of the Month
Book Club at rise of worship

SPICY JOHN THE BAPTIST *

by Leann Williams

We have just celebrated Advent and Christmas, the coming of the baby Jesus whom Matthew identifies as the Jewish Messiah and Luke identifies as the Savior for all humankind. This week the traditional church calendar celebrates the visit of the wise men to the holy family. The book of Mark skips the story of Jesus' birth and the wise men's visit and starts with the prophecy from Isaiah, "I will send my messenger ahead of you...a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" This passage is identified with John the Baptist. I have been pondering how John the Baptist prepared the way for the ministry and message of Jesus.

The gospel of John starts with a broad understanding of Jesus as the Word become flesh. I appreciate *The Voice's* poetic version of John Chapter 1 which reads,

¹ Before time itself was measured, the Voice was speaking.

² This celestial Word remained ever present with the Creator;

³ His speech shaped the entire cosmos.
Immersed in the practice of creating,
all things that exist were birthed in Him.

⁴ His breath filled all things
with a living, breathing light—

⁵ A light that thrives in the depths of darkness,
blazes through murky bottoms.
It cannot and will not be quenched.

⁶ A man named John, who was sent by God, was the first to clearly articulate the source of this Light. ⁷ This baptizer put in plain words the elusive mystery of the Divine Light so all might believe through him. Some wondered whether he might be the Light, ⁸ but John was not the Light. He merely pointed to the Light. ⁹ The true Light, who shines upon the heart of everyone, was coming into the cosmos.

¹⁰ He entered our world, a world He made; yet the world did not recognize Him. ¹¹ Even though He came to His own people, they refused to listen and receive Him. ¹² But for all who did receive and trust in Him, He gave them the right to be reborn as children of God;

¹⁴ The Voice took on flesh and became human and chose to live alongside us. We have seen Him, enveloped in undeniable splendor—the one true Son of the Father—evidenced in the perfect balance of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John the Baptist testified about Him and shouted, "This is the one I've been telling you is coming. He is much greater than I am because He existed long before me." ¹⁶ Through this man we all receive gifts of grace beyond *our* imagination. ¹⁷ You see, Moses gave us rules to live by, but Jesus the Anointed offered us gifts of grace and truth. ¹⁸ God, unseen until now, is revealed in the Voice, God's only Son, straight from the Father's heart."

What was the message John the Baptist preached that prepared the way for the Lord? His very lifestyle testified to his message. It is interesting to note that John the Baptist was Zechariah the priest's first-born son. He would have been expected to also be a priest. Yet, John chose to live in the desert, wear camel hair clothes, eat locusts and honey, and was NOT a part of the Jewish sacrificial system. His very lifestyle challenged the norms and assumptions of his people and his times. His life served as a witness to a change

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(continued from page 1) that Jesus brought in how we relate to God. His preaching testified to Jesus ushering in a new way to experience the Divine Light apart from the law, arising from truth and grace.

We can read about John's message in Matthew 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3. John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The ancient historian Josephus in his work *Antiquities*, defines *metanoia* as a change of mind of those who *abhor their errors and misdeeds or of those who enter upon a better course*. Strong's Concordance defines *metanoia* as to change one's mind, to reconsider, or to think differently. John challenged his listeners to consider an entirely different frame of reference for how they lived.

John baptized people in the Jordan River as a symbol of their repentance. The water symbolized cleansing and the start of a new life. He gained quite a following, and crowds came to see this strange fellow who was obviously bucking the system. His popularity aroused suspicion among the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem. They sent representatives to check him out. His response was somewhat less than hospitable. In fact, it was rather spicy.

The Voice in Luke chapter 3 reports John saying,

"You bunch of venomous snakes! Who told you that you could escape God's coming wrath? ⁸ Don't just talk of turning to God; you'd better bear the authentic fruit of a changed life. Don't take pride in your religious heritage, saying, "We have Abraham for our father!" Listen—God could turn these rocks into children of Abraham!

⁹ God wants you to bear fruit! If you don't produce good fruit, then you'll be chopped down like a fruitless tree and made into firewood. God's ax is taking aim and ready to swing!"

Pretty spicy words from John! It's clear that John considered actions to speak louder than words, and he believed God emphasizes actions over words as well.

It is the fruit of our lives that gives evidence of repentance, an inner transformation, or a new paradigm. It wasn't clear to the crowds exactly what John meant so they asked him, "Well, what should we do then?" John answered that anyone who has two coats should share one with someone who has none and anyone who has food should do the same. To tax collectors, he said, "Don't collect any more than you are required to". To soldiers he said "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely. Be content with your pay." In John's statements to the crowds, I find four principles. Evidence of repentance will include **generosity, contentment, honesty, and a refusal to use power or privilege to harm others**.

This whole scenario with John the Baptist reminds me of the long-held practice among Quakers of articulating core values (or what we refer to as our testimonies) which include simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality or equity, and stewardship. An acronym for these testimonies or values is SPICES. It is our shared historic perspective that inner transformation by the Spirit should work its way into our daily lives to give evidence of our new paradigm that stands in opposition to the powers of this world and the systems that they have created.

John's principles seem to me to be foundations for our Quaker testimonies. Generosity motivates me to create margins in my life of extra time, energy, and resources to give when a need arises. That process of creating margins is how I understand simplicity. Contentment is required for simplicity. I need to know and live into the idea of **enough**. When do I have enough so that I can stop consuming unnecessarily? Living within the limits of enough is good stewardship. Honesty is a big part of living with integrity. Not using my power or privilege to harm others supports the values of peace, community, and equity.

The times of John the Baptist and the life of Jesus of Nazareth as he entered his ministry were very similar to our own. The Romans used their power to dominate and subjugate people, often establish a reign of terror, and disregard the value of individual human beings. Greed and violence were part of their culture as it is in ours today. May we take the opportunity of a new year to do some deep reflection on how we wish to live our lives in opposition to the dominant systems around us and to bring light into the darkness in which we live and demonstrate the grace and truth that Jesus brought to us.

In closing, I would like to share from a blog entitled *The Beautiful Mess* by John Pavlovitz dated Dec 20, 2025.

"We are not who we **say** we are in this life; we are what we **do** with it. The values we espouse aren't actually valuable to us unless we embody those values when it is most difficult, when it confronts our preferences, or when it elevates someone we disagree with. We can make every grand declaration and proffer the most virtuous responses with our lips regarding the traits we treasure, but at the end of the day, our convictions are the sum total of our choices."

Leann Williams and her husband Bruce are long-time members of Spokane Friends. They founded and continue to shepherd a group in Coeur d'Alene which is called Friends in Common. Leann is a recorded minister in Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting. After a teaching career, she became a licensed massage therapist. The message above was given during Sunday worship at Spokane Friends on January 4, 2026. Bold type added by editor.

MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS MINUTES

December 21, 2025



The meeting was called to order by Clerk LaVerne Biel with prayer and the query "What if Jesus was born somewhere other than the stable in Bethlehem?" There were 14 people present.

Minutes: The minutes for November were read and approved as written.

Elders Report: Speakers are scheduled through the end of February. Elders will meet by zoom while Biels are gone. The focus for January will be Quaker values (SPICES).

The INUUC group was reminded of noise level and to keep doors shut. They have asked if Diana would like more hours; they were requested to provide a description of expectations and proposed hours. They are also hiring a pastor to preach the first Sunday of the month commencing in February.

There was discussion of scheduling children's church while LaVerne was gone. Sign-up was requested and packets are provided.

Treasurer's report: Deficit balance is slowly decreasing. **NOTED to combine the two See the Need entries (as both deficit and asset) in the Statement of Position into one line item.**

Stewards/Trustees Report: The outside sign lighting was repaired. For carpet installation in the downstairs classroom, Kent will contact an organization called Dignified Work Day. The plan is to hire two workers and a supervisor through them.

The Elevator and fire extinguishers have been checked. They are all OK and in compliance. There was water leaking from the furnace supply line and Bill Emery solved that problem.

The door to the fellowship hall at the bottom of the front stairway closes/ slams loudly. We need to install a mechanism to make it shut slowly and quietly.

The Nominating Committee had no report and hopes to bring one in January.

Walter Simon introduced Julie Nelson who will be his replacement for a month while he's gone. There was no report from Lyn Lindell about the refugee families she is assisting.

The Friendsgiving fundraiser earned approximately \$1600. 30 pies were sold and we could have sold 40.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Lois Kieffaber.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Keehnen, Temporary Recording Clerk



Financial Report



	<u>Nov 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Income:	\$ 8,506.45	\$ 48,899.46
Expenses:	7,266.37	50,567.46
Difference:	+ 1,240.08	- 1,668.00

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You can now give to Spokane Friends
via the QR code on the right!

..Or via our website,

your weekly worship email,

your bank's free Bill Pay service,

or you can mail it to us.

**Want to designate a gift just for
our new HVAC system?**

No problem, just scan the QRcode
on the left.



Elders at Spokane Friends have named January as "Quaker Values" month. Speakers will be considering historic Quaker testimonies, sometimes referred to by the acronym SPICES, standing for Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship (of Earth). Recorded minister Leann Williams opened this series with our front-page message on how John the Baptist's teachings dovetail and expand on the values that have been adopted by Quakers.

Quaker Lobby Condemns Kidnapping of Venezuela President and Violation of Venezuela's Sovereignty

Washington, D.C. – The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) strongly condemns the U.S. government's attack on Venezuela and kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. This is a deeply immoral and unjust escalation of President Trump's campaign of violence against Venezuela. It is an unauthorized act of war in violation of both domestic and international law. President Trump's claim that the United States will "run the country" following this attack is deeply concerning and a clear violation of Venezuela's sovereignty.

President Trump has chosen war, not peace.

President Trump has chosen war, not peace," said FCNL's general secretary Briget Moix. "This illegal attack and takeover of Venezuela is a shocking expansion of the administration's militarized approach to the world and will likely spark more violence in return."

Over the past several weeks the United States has bombed people in Nigeria and threatened attacks in Iran. The administration has continued to destroy boats and kill people in the Caribbean Sea, with more than 115 individuals now summarily executed without charge.

"The administration's claim that U.S. airstrikes in Venezuela were defensive in nature is utterly nonsensical and lacks any basis in fact. These actions are a categorical violation of Venezuela's sovereignty and a breach of both U.S. and international law," said FCNL's legislative director of foreign policy Heather Brandon-Smith. "Not only has Congress has not declared war but also several congressional resolutions, which specifically condemn attacks on Venezuela, have only narrowly failed. Congress doesn't want war, the people of the United States don't want war, the people of Venezuela don't want war."

FCNL urges Congress to exercise its constitutional war powers to halt further military action and violations of Venezuela's independence. It must reject the Trump administration's militarized approach in the region and globally. The US has a disastrous history of military interventions for regime change, especially in Latin America, and this only threatens to pull us deeper into endless war.

Congress doesn't want war, the people of the United States don't want war, the people of Venezuela don't want war.

Regional and global stability are built on mutual cooperation, peaceful diplomacy, and collective problem-solving – not on military might and relentless violence. Peace is only possible through peaceful means.

"Congress must reassert its war authority and restrain the Trump administration's reckless war-making and military takeover of another country," Moix urged. "One thing we know: War is not the answer."

Statement made by FCNL on January 3, 2026 <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2026-01/quaker-lobby-condemns-kidnapping-venezuela-president-and-violation-venezuelas>

Office Hours

Diana Davis, Office Administrator,
works remote Mon-Wed
checking email and phone messages.

In-office hours are
Thurs and Fri, 10:30 am–2:30 pm

Walter Simon, Publicity Manager,
In-office hours are

Tues and Wed 10:30 am–3 pm
or by appointment
Call 509-564-4070 or 509-327-7852



Note: The opinions expressed within this Newsletter and on our website are those of the authors, not the Meeting or the editor Lois Kieffaber.

OPEN HEART—OPEN MIND

A Photo Essay by Walter Simon



On the bus to Spokane Friends

The American Spirit these days comes more from the heart, an individual feeling of giving as the true meaning of Thanksgiving.



The Leadership Team: From right to left Safia, David, Hassan, Lyn, and Arifa

In a remarkable gesture of good will, the Spokane Friends community, inspired by David Roberts and with the support of Lyn Lindell and other community members, hosted approximately 70 Sudanese of all ages who have recently settled in our region. It proved a full Thanksgiving gesture for these recent Sudanese refugees new to our region.



No one went away hungry.

In the spirit of giving this writer feels moved by the compassion and bonding at the most humane terms, in the understanding we can celebrate our American traditions, in the spirit of thanksgiving.



Walter and Ache

The point is we sustain these humane American traditions not only in words but by cooperative community interactions.

The Event itself was conceived by David Roberts and Lyn Lyndell as a way of sharing with African friends some American traditions associated with the Thanksgiving Holiday. Stepping out in faith, they invited a group of Sudanese refugees whom they are helping with some of the "mechanics" of integration into American society. This group of refugees

has been housed together by World Relief at Go-Go Apartments in northern Spokane, so they can provide support for each other and to centralize the additional services provided them by their World Relief contacts.

Transporting so many people to Spokane Friends Meeting House was a serious logistical challenge. David asked his boss, Brandon Harrison, who manages Harlow's School Services, if he could rent one for this purpose, and was given the use of one **for free!** We are so grateful to Mr. Harrison and Harlow's for making this event do-able. In all, approximately 10 Spokane Friends served about 70 Sudanese refugees dinner on the night before Thanksgiving. **Many** Spokane Friends donated food for the event and/or helped set-out and serve the food. It was a delight to be present at this event for which so many helped provide and that so many attended, and it seemed like a taste of true international, interfaith fellowship.



Kadijah

Poet's Corner

My Church by Jeremy Street

A humble church, not even a steeple.
Open the doors and see all the people

The type of folk you can see most places
Thankful smiles and tear-tracked faces"
A saving grace in every heart...
But a nagging sense of lives apart

For we have thoughts we keep from healing
They can't be shown, they're not appealing

Best to keep them locked away
And hope they're gone by judgement day

This explains why contemplation
Degrades into evaluation

Why each one sees the other's error
And tells himself his heart is fairer

And though saved still sees his own damnation
Hiding in the congregation
And so we try to change each-other
In hopes this change our fear will smother
Old school, New school with thoughts like swords
Aghast at what these move us towards

All praying for the Holy Spirit
But hardened hearts can hardly hear it

Is there a cure for this conceit?
The false joy I feel in being elite

And if there is will it also cure
The shame I feel for being impure?

I asked Jesus to help me see
And this is what he said to me

The key you're seeking to discover
The fact true seeking will uncover
True for father, mother, sister, brother
Including you and every other
Always here but under cover
Is that you have the right to bless each other

This truth you had but chose to squander
And since then you've done naught but wander

You've sought a place where your opinion
Could be like God and have dominion

But this idle wish can never be
And God calls "please come home to me."

The way to answer God's sweet call
Is to cease to judge by blessing all

And see the holy right you would revoke
You've merely hid with judgment's cloak

Now claim it back through its appeal
Claim it, use it, and watch it heal

Healing mind and body and every Nation
And when you're done you'll see Creation

Announcement of Fig Tree
Legislative Conference on
January 31

An Interactive Zoom Workshop on March 14



In this 2-hour participatory program, we experience the history of the colonization of Turtle Island, the land now known as the United States. The story is told through the words of Indigenous leaders, European/American leaders, and Western historians. We engage with this history through experiential exercises and small group discussions. And we are invited to consider how we can build relationships with Indigenous peoples based on truth, respect, justice, and our shared humanity. Facilitators are both Native and non-Native persons. Sponsored by Friends Peace Teams. **Register:** <https://friendspeaceteams.org/upcoming-events/>