

SPOKANE WORD

January,
First Month,
2012



www.spokanefriends.com
spokanefriends@gmail.com

Spokane Friends
1612 W Dalke
Spokane, WA 99205
(509) 327-7852

Nick Block, pastor
(cell) 509-435-8053

Sunday Schedule:

Unprogrammed Worship 8:45
Education Hour 9:30
Meeting for Worship 10:45

Third Sunday of the Month:

Combined Worship 10:00
Meeting for Business 11:00
Potluck 12:00

**This is also Food Bank
Sunday**

It doesn't often occur to us that a word we use might mean something quite different to the person who hears us. It's so problematic that we've created a whole academic discipline, "linguistic semantics", to study how we use words to express ourselves. And to make matters even more difficult we have to account for our body language, facial expressions and verbal cues in any given attempt to communicate. Faith in the certainty of language is idolatry, and it often comes as a surprise to people just how impure language is as a form of communication. Yet we continue to exhibit an enormous trust in words. Even in the middle of a political campaign!

Robert Barclay, our earliest Quaker wordsmith and theologian, earned the ire of other churchmen of his day for saying that the words of scripture must be a secondary rule to the Spirit. Isaac Pennington, another early Friend, wrote that "And the end of words is to bring men to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter." And the same is true for creedal formulas. Friends have always maintained that the bond of union within the Body of Christ is neither in sacrament or creed but rather is found in inward experience—the experience of the one Divine Life that is reproducing in people the character of Jesus Christ. Such experience is necessarily alive and open to change. Rationally formulated intellectual attempts to express that primary relationship can be no more than provisional and because they are the work of people like you and me they can't assume to possess the finality of truth. Matter of fact they tend to crystallize thought on matters that will always be beyond human language to capture, they shackle the search for truth and form a wall designed to keep outside the embrace of the Christian faith many sincere and seeking souls. What is real is too great to be confined within the narrow limits of language.

Reading the reaction of others to something someone says comes naturally to us all. One recent Sunday morning two people gave wonderful reports on their experiences at conferences they had attended. A couple of individuals in the meeting fully engaged with one of the two speakers and utterly ignored the other. It couldn't be missed. Through their behavior they said to one of them: "Where you went and what you have to say is within my comfort zone so I'll listen" and to the other "Where you went and what you have to report is outside my comfort zone so I will tune you out." It is easy to get hung up on the meaning we affix to the words of another. Listening for the voice of Christ through the expression of another is an essential element for Friends.

Near the end of a recent Monthly Meeting I suggested that as an outreach ministry we should offer a program to provide a spiritual foundation for those who are involved in various forms of activism. Of course this was on the heels of the "Occupy Spokane" encampment downtown. Merely hearing the word 'activist' caused a few Friends to draw down the curtains on their minds. I literally felt it. For me, activism and activist are great words. I can't understand how anyone can read the Gospels or the Prophets, the Pentateuch or the Epistles without being confronted with the mandate to actively engage the world and its values. But evidently for others activism is loaded with negative connotations. Right here after Christmas is a good time to recall Arlo Guthrie's song about Santa Claus which pokes fun at how some of our language embodies prejudices: "Santa wears a red suit—must be a communist... a beard and long hair —must be a pacifist...." "Mister Clause sneaks in your home at night. He must be a dope fiend, to put you up tight".

O.K., if the Apostle Paul is right I should become increasingly sensitive to the words I use so as to not upset others. Isn't that the standard of love? "I'll not use loaded words if by doing so I cause my brother/sister to stumble." (my paraphrase of 1st Corinthians 8:13.)

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So here goes. How about this as a working premise? We should invite people to a workshop around the title: GRINDING MY SPIRITUAL LENS TO SHARPEN MY PROPHETIC VISION. Instead of the “activist” word, I’ve described what ‘activist’ type people are about. It acknowledges that a process is at work, hard work; a grinding away of that which impairs my vision of that to which Christ’s Spirit calls me. It also acknowledges that each of us have our own lens that requires attention.

Twenty years ago we had a friend who worked in the lab outside of Baltimore who sent us some of the earliest pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope. They were stunning. But almost immediately after Hubble went into orbit it became clear that something was wrong. While the pictures were clearer than those of any ground-based telescope, they weren’t the pristine images promised. They were blurry. Hubble’s primary mirror, polished so carefully and lovingly over the course of a full year, had a flaw called a “spherical aberration.” It was just slightly the wrong shape, causing the light that bounced off the center of the mirror to focus in a different place than the light bouncing off the edge. The tiny flaw — about 1/50th the thickness of a sheet of paper — was enough to distort the view. It’s humbling to be reminded that no matter how hard I might work on perfecting my spiritual lens it will still be flawed in some way. I’ll still need the help of others to help correct some ‘spherical aberration’ in my perception of another or an issue or an opportunity for ministry. -Nick

IT'S MOVIE TIME !!

The Christmas story has at its center the birth of a child who will change the world. The same theme permeates the Theater and Theology offering this month. Set in 2027, Children of Men, pictures a world that has fallen into chaos. No child has been born for 18 years and scientists are at a loss to explain why women can no longer become pregnant. Most of the world's societies have collapsed and in Britain, all foreigners have been declared illegal immigrants and are rounded up by British military forces to be deported. Theo Faren (Clive Owen), a beaten and downtrodden peace activist turned bureaucrat, unwittingly becomes involved in a precious secret, a lone pregnant woman, the miracle that can save humankind. With the help of aging hippie Jasper Palmer (Michael Caine), he must deliver her to safety via a perilous journey across England if humankind is to have a new future. This movie is rated R for violence and has been called “a thinking person's action movie.” Join us Friday Jan. 13, same time (7 pm), same place (Vintage Retirement Community) same refreshments (popcorn and lemonade).



Quaker Spice!

The Peace Education Subcommittee of Northwest Yearly Meeting’s Board of Christian Education has announced the theme of “**SPICE: the Friends Testimonies**” for Peace Month, January 2012. Our Peace with Justice Committee is helping us participate. Each Sunday during the month one of five members of our Peace with Justice Committee will share briefly on the topic for that week as we enter our time of un-programmed worship.

Week One the topic is **Simplicity**
Week Two the topic is **Peace**
Week Three the topic is **Integrity**
Week Four the topic is **Community**
Week Five the topic is **Equality**.



Some of us appreciated using the Daily Reader in prior years. It has been reproduced and made available for this year. The goal is that Friends will learn more about our history and traditions in order to discover ways to practice a Quaker understanding of Gospel in our twenty-first century context.

January Newsletter Monthly Meeting Report

An abbreviated review of the Meeting for Business held December 18, 2011.

It was recommended that the 2012 budget be returned to the committees for reconsideration and that a pared down budget be presented to Monthly Meeting in January because, according to our Treasurer, expenses for 2011 have exceeded income.

Stewardship and Trustees report: The office has a new printer our phone service has been switched to Comcast. New electrical outlets near the pulpit will remove the current safety hazard. Energy efficient exit lights will be installed. Bathroom remodeling will wait till next March for further consideration.

It was recommended and approved that Meeting emergencies will take precedence if a scheduling conflict arises.

Peace with Justice reported that a Legislative Conference will occur on January 21 at the Episcopal cathedral from 8:45 am to 3 pm. Julia Stronks from Whitworth University will speak on "The Global Economy and Our Economy".

Since January has been designated Peace Month by the Yearly Meeting, Peace With Justice Committee members will do short presentations at each of the five meetings for worship that month. The theme has the acronym SPICE, representing the five Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, and Equality.

The Education Committee recommended that the restricted funds raised to support Jeannette's projects for children and youth be "earmarked" for the Education Committee to use for special children/youth programs.

Camila's Wednesday night group is being well-attended (4-7 youth). She has started a "Saturday brunch group" to serve girls who wish to engage in Bible study, spiritual growth and development, and opportunities for service and leadership. Meeting members are invited to participate in donating small mail-able items that will make up care packages for our away-from-home folks. A class has been launched during the Sunday morning Education Hour which focuses on the music of the church.

The pastor report included that Kim Smith has been offered the Office Clerk position, May Hill passed away, flowers were sent to the memorial service for Becky Williams' father, the funeral for Mike Roger's daughter Michelle was held in our meeting-house with 200 in attendance. Nick thanked all who helped prepare and serve a meal to the family. Joyce Nelson's son will be married in our meeting house on December 23. A radio play of Dicken's Christmas Carol will be presented at 6 pm on Christmas Eve. Meeting for worship will follow the "third Sunday" combined worship schedule for both Christmas and New Year's Day. He also reported that he is considering whether our Meeting might be called to give leadership in providing a spiritual basis for activism.

Bob Wiese closed the meeting with prayer.



A Non-Quaker Leading a Quaker Organization

By Dennis Russell who retires January 6 from serving Friendsview Retirement Community as its Executive Director.

When I say that the last eight years have been the most stretching period in my professional life, I usually receive a puzzled look or a question about how that is possible. Being in the later stages of my leadership journey, it is a reasonable assumption that knowledge, experience, past successes and well-worn management tools developed over the past 25 years should create an easier path to achieving “success.” The dilemma I experienced in a Quaker-sponsored ministry was that the model of governance and decision making challenged my definition of success and early in my tenure some of those same well-worn management tools were exposed as ineffective when immersed in Quaker process and culture. As we prepare to serve the next generation of residents and staff, these approaches position Quaker organizations to respond to the desire for active participation that we anticipate today and into the future.

Let me start by saying that Quakers don’t have a corner on thoughtful process, but the fact that it is imbedded in the culture and DNA of most Quaker organizations does make it more organic. My metrics for determining success were adjusted to include significance, community building and longer term horizons. A “nothing about me without me” philosophy and culture of testing policy changes and decisions with those impacted required additional steps, and more patience than I possess. The consensus model of decision making, valuing the minority opinion, holding opinions lightly and trusting the collective wisdom of the group required some new tools in my tool belt and I needed to ditch some well-worn and comfortable skills developed over a long time. Let me provide some examples.

Nothing About Me Without Me – Defining community to include each resident, staff member and board member as a full member of the community, acknowledging the light of Christ in each person requires a significant level of participation in the decisions that impact their lives. Being comfortable asking people to submit to authority and allow those in leadership to make decisions that “we” deem beneficial to the larger community was in many cases in opposition to allowing others to share their gifts and the promotion of self-directed lives. I was not used to a culture that required each initiative or recommendation presented for consideration by the board of directors to include feedback from those impacted by the decision. The residents’ council, 35 committees made up of residents, individual resident neighborhoods, employee advisory council or specific departments all had input into the various decisions that even remotely affected them.

“An exclusive focus on external results rules out the source of productivity and passion: the inner lives and vision of individuals together with the wisdom and cohesion of the community.” Margaret Benefiel

Valuing the Minority Opinion – The willingness to delay action or decision until there is agreement or “collective judgment” can be a time-consuming process. Being comfortable with disparate views, tension and a willingness to move forward with a few board members dissenting was a common experience for me before arriving at Friendsview Retirement Community. I usually knew the outcome in advance regarding action items identified on the board agenda. I had also developed a practice of meeting with a number of influential board members prior to the meeting when dealing with difficult or controversial decisions to discuss (influence) the desired outcome. The art of convincing, articulate speech, while championing a motion is much different than seeking united action after all perspectives and opinions are considered.

The goals of consensus or clear hearts that lead to an eventual decision are usually preceded by questions such as;

- Are there those who do not feel clear about the decision?
- Is there more information needed?
- Are there clarifications required?
- Do you need more time to pray and reflect on the issue before us?

Continued...

On many occasions decisions are delayed to allow more time, provide new information or secure additional feed-back from those impacted by the decision. I initially viewed this extended process as ineffective and not very nimble. What I found over the last eight years is that we are actually trading time. The process and time required on the front-end getting to the decision, makes the implementation much smoother. The effort required to solicit various ideas and opinions creates a significant amount of buy-in (or at least understanding). I spend less time with people trying to poison the well and find many people carrying water for whatever we are attempting to accomplish together. Holding my opinions lightly and trusting the collective wisdom has proven to be much more effective than my historic approaches.

“Getting others excited about future possibilities is not about creating better Power-Point presentations or better public speaking skills and it’s certainly not about being more charming or charismatic. It’s about intimacy. It’s about familiarity. It’s about empathy. The kind of communication need-ed to enlist others in a common vision re-quires understanding constituents at a much deeper level than we normally find comfortable. It requires experiencing life as they experience it.” Barry Posner

Problem Solving – I used to think I was very good at problem solving. Identifying the issue, getting the needed parties together to understand both sides, assemble required facts, prioritize and select the best solution, implement the solution and evaluate the results. Simple, effective and proven strategies until I was asked to add a new condition into the “evaluate the results” phase of the process. One simple question seemed to unwind my definition of success when it came to problem solving. Did the outcome build community? Honest-ly, when applying that standard, I realized in many cases I was eliminating the problem or more accurately getting rid of the cause that created the problem using positional authority. Defining success to include community building changes the process used to actually resolve the conflict in a way that is understandable and fair to all concerned. *“Your goal should be that when the meeting is over, the other person has processed the problem, selected a solution, developed a game plan, and taken ownership of it. His or her relationship with you will not be a dependent one, but a deepening one.”* John C. Maxwell

Leaderless Organizations – My initial view of Quaker governance and organizational structure was a group of well-intentioned people with a resistance to the concept of leadership. The role of the clerk (chair in most organizations) by definition serves as a primary organizer for meetings and presides over the business agenda and discernment process. A commitment to flat organizational structure, avoidance of hierarchy and desire to make decisions in the collective had me wondering why we need leadership or management for that matter. It appeared from the outside that we needed patient individuals skilled at listening with a willingness to sit through countless meetings managing a slow and iterative process that would eventually lead to decisions that every-one would support. The gifts needed to identify a problem or issue, manage meetings, encourage participation, craft suggestions and ideas into an agreed upon solution were much different than my contemporary Western view of an effective leader.

I have come to appreciate that a culture open to influence, open to change, and one which encourages contrary opinions, creates “leaderfull” organizations not leaderless ones. The environment that provides an opportunity to change and doesn’t attempt to control others does not lead to anarchy or chaos. It actually allows non-traditional leaders to step forward and causes us to rein in our own self-importance. It takes grace, humility and a significant amount of spiritual maturity to admit that we depend on others as much as they depend upon us.

“Organizations, like the people who com-pose them, are always in a state of becoming. Covenants bind people together and enable them to meet their corporate needs by meeting the needs of one another. Leaders owe people space, Space in the sense of freedom. We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy healing and inclusion.” Max Dupree

Reprinted from *Friends Services for the Aging* December 2011 Newsletter.

Render unto Caesar

Reclaiming our Prophetic Voice

2012 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Saturday, Jan. 21, 2012

8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Episcopal Cathedral of St. John
127 E. 12th Ave. - Spokane
Keynote

‘The Global Economy and Us’

Julia K. Stronks, JD, PhD

Edward B. Lindaman Chair and professor of political science, Whitworth University

Panel on Economic Justice Statements of Churches

The Rev. Dale Cockrum - United Methodist District Superintendent
The Rev. Pat Hartin - Ecumenical Officer of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane
The Rev. Jimmy Pierce, president of the Spokane Ministers Fellowship
The Rt. Rev. James Waggoner, Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

Workshops Sessions

State Budget Issues
Advocating Congregations
Environmental Stewardship,
Interaction with Keynoter and Panelists on Faith and the Economy

For information, contact

Malcolm Haworth - The Fig Tree - (509) 535-4112
The Rev. Paul Benz - Faith Action Network (206) 625-9790

TO RSVP

Send suggested donation of \$20 (scholarships available)
To The Fig Tree • 1323 S. Perry St. • Spokane WA 99202

**Nick Block is involved with planning the
Opening and closing worship experiences**



January 2012

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Education 7pm	3	4 <i>Milt Asher</i> Youth 6pm Music 6:30 pm	5 <i>Pat Nickerson</i> Tops 5pm	6 <i>Cliff Bendixen</i>	7
8	9	10 Gideon's Meal 6pm	11 Youth 6pm Music 6:30 pm	12 Tops 5pm Elders 6pm Stewardship/ Trustees 7pm	13	14
15 Combined Worship 10am Monthly Meeting 11am Potluck Noon	16	17 <i>Mike Rogers</i>	18 Youth 6pm Music 6:30 pm	19 Tops 5pm Foresters 6pm	20	21 Legislative Conference 8:45 am -3 pm
22 <i>Robbie Wiese</i>	23 <i>Juanita Salazar</i> <i>Jeremy & Nancy</i> <i>Street</i>	24 <i>Keith Sellers</i>	25 Youth 6pm Music 6:30 pm	26 Tops 5pm	27 ← Mid-year →	28 <i>Kent &</i> <i>LaVerne Biel</i> Boards →
29	30	31				

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Holdíng in the Light...

- * Pat Foster and his upcoming surgery
- * Amber and her family
- * Becky Williams' and her mother and father and the rest of her family.
- * Those of our Meeting's families serving in the military
- * Those in our care who are traveling
- * Betty Bendixen as she is cared for by her family.
- * Dwaine and Margaret, Jonas' brother-in-law and family
- * Families and Country during hard economic times