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# THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

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Fifth Month 2007

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## Daily Witness

A few years ago my cousin came running into my living room waving a magazine. "Look! You can get a hundred dollars for writing a short article for *Modern Romances!*"

"What? I don't even read that kind of rubbish! I promised God I would only write things that glorify Him."

But she was excited. "A hundred bucks! Look! It's a series of articles people write about the place where they live. Every month they have a different place. There's never been one about Hawai'i. It's easy! You can do it!"

I shook my head. "I don't want my name in a magazine like that."

"Oh, you're so hard-headed! I'll leave it here. Read it. Think about it."

As she left, she plopped the magazine down on my table, open to a short article about someone's hometown in New England. Eventually my curiosity got the best of me, and I read it. It was OK. Nothing bad in it. I glanced through the magazine, looking at the pictures and reading the titles of other articles. It was sleazy at best. No, that was not the place for my work. I could use a hundred dollars, and an article about living in Hawai'i was harmless, but how would it glorify God?

I went about my daily chores, and suddenly a thought came into my mind: God created this island, and I'm always conscious of that. Did I have the courage to share that with the editors and readers of a romance magazine?

In II Timothy 1:7 & 8 we read, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord."

I realized that I could write an article about something close to my heart—the island I loved—and at the same time introduce God to a reading audience who might not know Him. I wrote the article, sharing my wonder of the active volcano a short drive from my home. "Creation is a continuing process,"

I wrote, "and we are the awe-struck audience to God's handiwork."

I went on to describe other features of the island, both those of God's creation and those made by modern man. I closed with, "From Genesis to modern luxury, from rainforest to desert, snowy peaks to sandy beaches, my island home is a microcosm of all time and every geographical region."

A few weeks later I received a letter and a check. They had accepted my work! I could hardly wait to see the article in print. The fact that that particular magazine had accepted an article acknowledging God as Creator added to the joy of my anticipation.

Imagine my disappointment when the magazine came out, and I discovered that God and all Biblical references had been edited out! I admit my final sentence had been long and cumbersome. The edited sentence was more concise. Once the editor of a community newspaper, I understood that copy must be edited for space and clarity. But to eliminate all reference to the author's slant—that God was Creator—was to eliminate the heart of the story.

I expressed my disappointment to friends, and was further disappointed. Even Christians waved aside my lament by reminding me I'd been paid, as if that was the whole object of writing the article.

Months passed, and I turned to other work in which I interacted with a variety of people. I easily adapted to diverse points of view which I expressed in conversation. Then one day I realized that I often edited God out of my end of conversations with certain people!

To one person with a particular problem I might say with genuine compassion, but within her non-Christian context, "You don't have to accept that kind of treatment. Why not file a complaint?" To a Christian with a similar problem, I would say, "Let's pray about it and ask God what He wants you to do."

I was shocked to hear what I was saying. I'd thought I was like the apostle Paul, who wrote, "I

## Scheduled Meetings for Worship

(For worship at OYM monthly meetings see [www.ohioyearlymeeting.org](http://www.ohioyearlymeeting.org))

Meeting	Location	Contact Person	Contact Information	Meeting Schedule
Arbroath Christian Friends	Arbroath, Scotland	Henry Logan	UK # 07855-503399 log1957an@yahoo.co.uk	First Days, 10 AM
Athens Christian Friends	Athens, Greece	Themistoklis Papaioannou	papathem@gmail.com; P.O. Box 21121, Athens 11410, Greece	First Days, 5 PM
Crossroads	Michigan: Flint, White Lake, Lansing	Phil Helms	248-360-2074; admin@michiganquakers.org	Weekly/First Days
Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ	Evanston, IL (near Chicago)	Robert Hopper	847-733-7226 ; <a href="mailto:friendrobert61@sbcglobal.net">friendrobert61@sbcglobal.net</a>	Monthly / 2nd Seventh Day
Goshen	Scone, Scotland	Paul Thompson	UK # 01738 620688; Book-seeker@blueyonder.co.uk	1st & 3rd First Days
Greenwich	London, England	Simon Watson	<a href="mailto:simonw@quaker.org.uk">simonw@quaker.org.uk</a>	Weekly/ First Days
Gwinnett	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; <a href="mailto:a_lang@bellsouth.net">a_lang@bellsouth.net</a>	Weekly/ First Days
Richland/Ashland Friends	Loudonville, Ohio	Scott Savage	419-368-9419 (leave message)	2nd First Day
Ripley Christian Quakers	Ripley, Derbyshire, UK	Mike Wakefield	UK # 01773-541424 <a href="mailto:Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk">Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk</a>	First Days, 10:30 AM
Salisbury	Salisbury, Maryland	Kye Parsons	410-749-8221 <a href="mailto:kyeparsons@hotmail.com">kyeparsons@hotmail.com</a>	First Days, 1:30 PM
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 <a href="mailto:geoff@gsgilmore.com">geoff@gsgilmore.com</a>	3rd Fifth Day

## In this Issue

The spring issue one year ago concentrated on the theme of listening to God's Voice. Most of the contributions to this present issue focus on a

step beyond listening—witnessing to others about what we have heard.

Editor

*The Conservative Friend* is published four times a year under the care of the Wider Fellowship of Conservative Friends Committee of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, Barnesville, Ohio 43713. For more information about OYM, visit [www.ohioyearlymeeting.org](http://www.ohioyearlymeeting.org).

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The editor welcomes articles for publication, those written recently as well as excerpts from earlier Friends' writings. Subscriptions are funded through readers' contributions and an appropriation from OYM.

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have become all things to all men.” (I Cor. 9:22) I had such empathy with people in all conditions, but I'd failed to get the first part of Paul's message. In verse 21 he had acknowledged that he was operating under Christ's law, "so as to win those not having the law."

I had been offering humanitarian aid, but I'd flinched from trying to win souls for Christ. I'd edited God out of human relationships for fear of offending. What if they rejected the message? What if they rejected my help? What if they rejected me? I'd failed to give them a choice to accept or reject the gospel.

At one time I spent a year in rainy Western Washington. Every weekday morning, as I walked the soggy half-mile to the post office, an elderly woman invariably fell into step beside me as I passed her house. No matter how gloomy the weather, she greeted me cheerfully: "Isn't this a be-you-tiful day? God is so good!"

She delighted in the beauty of the natural world, and freely gave credit to the Author of that beauty. She did not know who I was or what I believed. She did not consider the possibility of offense or rejection. She simply and wholeheartedly presented me with her unedited joy in God and His creation, and my day became brighter.

I had found fault with the editors of that magazine, even though I knew full well they were not in the business of spreading the gospel message. But as a professed Christian, what was my excuse for editing God out of conversations with individuals who might need Him?

In Mark 8:38 Jesus says, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

We are the instant editors of all our own words, spoken and written. We can eliminate God from those words to save time, space, or rejection. Or we can include Him as the main focus of our communication with everyone we meet.

Two years ago I was making a concrete floor for my composting toilet. I picked up rocks from the

ground like manna, filling bucket after bucket, and dumping them within the frame where I would pour cement. As I was working one morning, a woman approached, asking, "Did you see my cat?"

I did not know the woman or her cat, so I asked, "What does it look like?"

She told me, but I had not seen her lost cat. She watched me working, and said, "What are you doing?"

I explained, and she laughed. Waving her arm over the rocky ground, she said joyfully, "The Lord blessed us with plenty of rocks!"

Would I have said that to a stranger? I would more likely have said, "It's a good thing you have plenty of rocks!" She did not know if I knew the Lord. It did not matter. She knew Him, and without stopping to edit, she expressed her heartfelt opinion: the Lord blessed us with plenty of rocks!

In my work with people I meet, I can still sympathize and give help to those in need, being like them in the sense that I, too, have human needs. However, as a Christian I am commissioned to go farther than that: to act from within Christ's law, or I merely offer temporary aid. Giving bread to a hungry man might give him a little strength for awhile. Teaching a child to read will give her a chance for educational opportunities in the future. But spreading God's message over the bread and the reading instruction offers strength and opportunity for everlasting life.

Romans 1:16-17 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

(Scripture quotes in this article are from the New International Version.)

Malie Sellers

Malie lives on the Big Island of Hawai'i near one of her daughters and her family. Her book *Toward the Sunrise* was published in 1978. Malie is an affiliate member of Rockingham Meeting (Ohio YM).

## Tradition, Culture, and Witness

Jesus warns us against “teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:9), but even the most faithful Christians often find the future path unclear. To some extent we are all blinded by various worldly attachments, so the voice of our Guide is not always as clear as we would like. Often it is easier to tell what we should *not* do, rather than what we *should* do. Then too, the Lord on occasion partly withholds His Light so that we might desire Him more, and so that we can train the human will in God’s walk without expecting God to do everything for us.

The Christian walk is full of subtlety. To a degree greater than we recognize, we end up patterning our lives after certain inherited customs instead of after the divine will. When we mistake these inherited patterns as a complete expression of God’s will for us, then, without realizing it, we are teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. These precepts may acquire an unjustified intensity simply because we do view them as divine when they are merely human.

In addition, our secular culture holds forth various other patterns whose widespread acceptance makes them hard to ignore. Western cultural patterns include the expectation that happiness is achieved through the acquisition of things, leading to a de-

sire for more and more; the assumption that a desire for sexual activity influences all our choices; and a preference for violence as a means to political ends and even as entertainment. Also, a strong theme in much of American culture is the supposition that the United States has been specially chosen by God to carry out His will. While most conservative Friends do not explicitly endorse those patterns, those ideas sometimes influence our behavior and creep into our teaching. Then, again, we are teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

We teach by how we live as well as by what we say. Maintaining a lifestyle in which we do without the unnecessary sets an example which, if widely practiced in our affluent culture, would go far toward solving international problems and might also bring about a major economic reorganization. When we are attached to the world, the flow of grace into our souls is much impeded. By freeing ourselves from the precepts of men, both religious and secular, and being open and responsive to the direct teaching of God, conservative Friends can offer a powerful witness of God’s grace for the world.

Joseph Conwill

Joseph lives close to the land in rural, western Maine near the town of Rangeley.

## CFC Discusses the Witness of Friends’ Testimonies

The Christian Friends Conference, Western Region, met Saturday, March 17, 2007, at Berkeley Friends Church. As usual, our day included two sessions of waiting worship, one of them lasting about two hours. We were favored with helpful ministry, especially in the first and longer of these sessions. We were reminded of Paul’s statement in Romans that we died with Christ, in order to be dead to sin and free from its power.

In the afternoon, Stephen Matchett and Eric Moon led us in a discussion on Friends’ Testimonies. They

reminded us that those actions by which we witness to Christ arise from a living experience of the Lord’s power. We lose something precious when we reduce them to abstract principles or ideals, or even when we simply accept them as tradition, as something we passively receive as part of an inheritance. Far better for us is to seek the experience out of which the historical testimonies arose; then our lives will witness powerfully today. Some Friends mentioned that they and others have been attracted to Friends by descriptions of “the Testimonies,” and many Friends

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## Early Friends' Witness

Early on, as Jack Smith elucidated in an earlier issue, first generation Quakers were committed to spreading the gospel to save all people in Jesus' name. They were ardent participants in the Lamb's war to bring individuals from the lure of Satan to the everlasting Truth in Christ's power. For over thirty years our spiritual forebears devoted themselves to fostering God's kingdom "and leaving them there for Christ to reign." Those Friends experienced harrowing imprisonments as well as intense poverty for their efforts in Truth.

Toward the end of the 17th Century, however, the British government offered Friends amnesty if they would moderate their efforts to bring people to Christ and agree that it did not matter which faith and practices people espoused. Many Quakers accepted this amnesty and ceased participating in the Lamb's crusade.

George Fox and those close to him acknowledged that God ordered him and other Friends to accept the rulership of Christ, while waiting on the Lord for His guidance and love, which love overcomes all evil and bitterness, and recognizes the power of God within us. Needless to say, Fox and those close to him were disappointed with the Friends who were willing to compromise their religious principles.

Fox expressed this disappointment in his 405th epistle, written to Friends in Pennsylvania and New Jersey: "But you gave me no account of the increase of Truth amongst you, nor what Meetings you have had amongst the Indian kings and their people abroad in

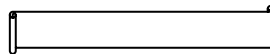
the countries, and of your visiting Friends in New England, Virginia and Carolina, nor of your travels and labors in the Gospel...." Fox continues in the power of God expressing keen disappointment with the activity in the ministry of these Friends: "And you being many, and having many of the Friends of the ministry, ... you may be a hindrance unto another, if you do not travel in the Life of the universal Truth, that would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth." Fox believed that Friends were obligated to bring all people to the feet of God, and he did not surrender. He labored with Friends to restore their commitment to preaching Christ's Gospel to everyone willing to open themselves to God's everlasting Truth.

We often talk of the 1827 Hicksite-Orthodox separation and the 1847 Gurneyite-Wilburite split as the most important conflicts among Friends. However, the lack of unity that occurred among Friends at the close of the 17th Century was the most dangerous. It put us in conflict with Jesus' prophetic goal of initiating the Blessed Kingdom embracing all humanity. It precipitated the era of what Friends now call Quietism.

But all is not lost. We conservative Friends may be small in number but we can serve God's purpose by declaring His Kingdom wherever we are sent to do the work of our Creator. We are not alone. The Spirit of the Lord is with us, abiding in our precious souls. We are Jesus' beloved, participating in the Lamb's war to usher in God's everlasting love.

Arthur Berk

Arthur is an affiliate member of Rockingham Meeting. He lives in New York City.



( CFC Report continued from page 4 )

find their spiritual grounding and identity in them. In response, we were reminded that whatever our Quaker tradition, we must seek to discern the thread that binds testimonies to their source, the power of Christ. For many liberal Friends, that means seeking where the testimonies came from.

For many evangelicals, it means seeking to understand the behaviors that faith in Christ will lead to. We parted in Christian love, purposing to meet again on June 16.

Max Hansen

Max lives in Berkeley, California, and serves as the coordinator of the CFC, Western Region.

## Reports from Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ Worship Group

### First Month 13, 2007

We had ten people in attendance at Lake Forest Friends Meetinghouse. Following introductions (we had several newcomers), the period of Spirit-led Bible reading was deeply appreciated by all. The readings offered flowed from the Holy Spirit and provided a sound prelude to our period of waiting worship. At the rise of our worship we shared reflections on our worship experience and our prayer concerns.

It was shared that a deeper sense of our connection to one another is growing, and that the care and concern for one another includes a sense of care and concern for the worship group as a whole. That concern is evidenced in one way by individuals taking responsibility for hosting and providing snacks and meals for our time of fellowship following worship, and in another by the sense, that I have, that our prayer requests are held in the Light of Christ Jesus during the weeks between our gatherings.

During our time of fellowship we shared a simple meal of Southern (Louisiana, and further south still, Brazil) dishes: Red beans and rice, cornbread, corn relish, fruit, and several other tasty dishes all prepared and provided by Judith Condren (Brazil) and Maurine Pyle (Louisiana) of Lake Forest Friends Meeting.

### Third Month 10, 2007

Ten of us gathered at Evanston Friends Meetinghouse for worship and fellowship in the name of Christ Jesus, the Word of God. Following introduc-

tions (we had two new attenders) we entered into the period of Spirit-led Bible reading which was deeply appreciated by all. The readings shared during this and our worship flowed from the Holy Spirit, with themes of strength in the Lord, witness and testimony, renewal and hope, and unity as a result of living and walking in the Spirit rather than being derived from, and grounded in, our own natural understanding or acquired knowledge and skills. Following the period of worship we shared reflections and our prayer concerns.

We discussed participating in a group activity or supporting a project that has a positive impact on the world outside of our gathering. There was a sense that it is essential that this work be an outgrowth of and grounded in the transformation of our hearts and minds. We discussed several options for what form any collective work may take and how we may support or participate in it, and we were asked to consider the role of witness and evangelism in relation to the foregoing. It was felt that the determination of a group activity or specific project requires more discussion. We were encouraged to consider the question regarding witness and evangelism and to bring our thoughts and feelings regarding it to our next gathering.

We had a wonderful time of fellowship, with food and beverages supplied by two of our regular attenders, Judith Condren and Diane Barounis.

Robert Hopper

Robert lives with his wife, Rosemary, in Evanston, Illinois. He is the convener of the FGJC Worship Group.

## Financial Contributions Appreciated

*The Conservative Friend* is financed through contributions from readers, with help from OYM. Small donations for *TCF*, as well as larger ones, are gratefully accepted. Please make checks (postal orders for donations outside US) to "The Conserva-

tive Friend" and send them to Elvina Krekler (address on page 2). The value of a subscription is \$10/year. Any excess over \$10 that a person contributes in a given year is probably tax deductible, because *TCF* is a publication of Ohio YM.

## The Apple of His Eye

The weight of silence is disturbed only by the oil stove's quiet bubble and the cat's measured purr. My Bible lies across my lap, open at the first and second chapter of prophet Zechariah's vision of a new Jerusalem.

Just three months earlier, the Lord had spoken to Zechariah giving him words of rebuke for the people. Zechariah called for repentance, exhorting the people to turn from their evil ways and deeds. This was followed by his vivid and colorful vision, described throughout the book.

As I read, I become aware of parallels that might be drawn between Zechariah's world and my own. An angel speaks, and reports the world to be still and at peace, but a false peace it seems. The Lord is forthright in his anger against the nations that enjoy their ease because, He says, whilst His anger was yet mild, they heaped evil on evil. The Lord goes on to say that after 70 years He has returned to Jerusalem and to His people with compassion. He promises that His house will be rebuilt and overflow with good things. He also promises help to reunite them, especially those who were scattered and to throw down their enemies.

He says that Jerusalem will be a city without walls, so numerous shall the men and cattle be in her. And then, I am astonished to read, he says "I will be a wall of fire around her, and a glory in the midst of her."

*A wall of fire?* What kind of city is this that needs no defensive walls and that is lit from within by the glory of God? Surely, a rare kind of city indeed. The Lord says it is a city built for those He has called away from Babylon. It is to be a city of righteousness and true peace. The Lord goes on to declare that He will raise His hand to those who attempt to harm His people for He says, "Whoever

touches you, touches the apple of my eye." *The apple of His eye?* I am bowled over. How wonderful! We are called by grace, drawn by mercy, sustained by His love, simply to become the apple of His eye.

The Lord tells His people to shout aloud and rejoice at His coming to make His dwelling among them. Then silence falls once more. The glorious vision retreats. The beautiful horses, the fragrant myrtles, the angels and the wall of fire pass into the shadows. The silence sinks deeper, to the place where the Lord sometimes chooses to speak to the humble and simple hearted. I am excited! Where is this city, glory lit from within and walls of fire without? And then, at the end of chapter two comes the sobering cry, "Silence all mankind, in the presence of the Lord! For He has bestirred Himself out of His holy place."

Chastened, I wait. The stove bubbles. The cat purrs. A new voice sounds, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say 'Lo here,' or 'Lo, there,' for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17 v21) Now I understand. Christ is building His new city in those hearts that are repentant and obedient to His will. He is preparing us to be His bride to dwell with Him forever in His holy city. A righteous city of glory, lit from within and walls of fire without. The fire of the Holy Spirit stands about to shield us from our enemies, as the old walls of sin and selfishness begin to crumble and melt under His loving touch.

The stove splutters fitfully. The cat rises and stretches in a graceful arch. Outside a snow wind moans and hail clatters against the casement. All is grace.

Hazel Ramsay

Hazel and Andrew, her husband, live in a rural area of Scotland northwest of Aberdeen. Hazel is an affiliate member of Rockingham Meeting.

## Peace?

If there are sufficient contributions, a forthcoming issue of *TCF* will focus on the meaning and practice of peace in our daily lives. Please consider what thee might contribute to a witness on this topic, either an original article or something previously written by another Friend.

*The Conservative Friend*  
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### **Opening Prayer**

Lord, open my lips and my heart  
And my will and my mind  
That my mouth, my whole being,  
My whole behavior, my whole attitude  
May declare your Praise  
And serve your Kingdom  
In the Name and Life and Power  
Of the Living Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Now, today, and forever.  
Amen.

William P. Taber, Jr.