
THE CONSERVATIVE FRIEND

Number 29

A Publication of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends

Eighth Month 2007

Conservative Friends Gather near Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Silence had settled in the meetinghouse and on those Friends who filled it. From outside came the sounds of Seventh Day evening traffic in Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania. Most of the spaces on the benches were filled when the man, a stranger to those present, entered the door. He made his way with a sense of purpose to a spot on a back bench and sat down. He didn't speak until after the rise of meeting, as Friends had begun to converse with one another. But our visitor raised his voice and spoke with a sense of urgency that compelled those present to listen.

He said he had been working all day and was driving home when he passed the Lampeter Meeting House. The Holy Spirit had urged him to turn his car around after he'd passed the meeting house and to join us in worship.

And then he offered, in brief, his personal testimony. Several years earlier he had met the Lord Jesus and left a life of sin and iniquity. Now he was endeavoring to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance in every area of life. His testimony was encouraging to many of us and we were glad he had felt welcome as a visitor in our midst. We were also thankful that the worship was in itself worthy of a guest. That evening's meeting had been rich in ministry that exalted Jesus, and it felt right that we had left the meeting house's front door open to welcome in any who felt a leading to join us.

That small Lampeter Meeting House, with little to offer but benches, walls, and a roof -- no more than early generations of Friends had -- was filled with worshippers on three separate occasions during the weekend of Sixth Month 22-24, when at least 90 Friends gathered in Lancaster County under the care of Keystone Fellowship Friends for worship and fellowship in the name of Christ Jesus. Friends traveled from Iowa, Colorado, Texas, New York, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina and Maryland (and probably at least one other state that I've overlooked). We collected at the home of

Steve and Charlotte Geyer where we had our meals, and we met in the Geyer's workshop for Bible reading and worship the times we weren't at the meeting house.

The weekend's splendid weather was a blessing, as was the number of families who were able to attend. There were about 15 young people and about the same number of children age ten and under among us. Meals, served buffet style, were a time of refreshment and became progressively less formal, with Friends sitting together in small groupings under the trees as well as at the tables set up in Steve and Charlotte's workshop. Especially memorable for the younger children was the range of baked goods and goodies, including cookies and chocolate cake available for breakfast, left over from the previous night's supper. One Friend was heard to jokingly wonder if Lancaster County breakfasts are always so rich!

Some attendees camped at the Geyer's or stayed in their home, some made their own arrangements for lodging, and a large contingent of us stayed in the dormitory at nearby Lancaster Mennonite High School, where the rooms were comfortable. With limited space for parking at Lampeter Meeting House, and some Friends were at the gathering without personal transportation, Friends who were driving between the dormitory and the Geyer's home and the meeting house were encouraged to fill up their vehicles if possible for each trip, and there was much sharing of rides between locations.

Seventh Day afternoon was left open on the schedule so that there would be time for informal fellowship. Several Friends met outdoors to read and discuss Psalm 133. For the young children, there were materials such as play-dough, crayons and bubble blowing paraphernalia. Many of the young and not-so young adults spent part of the afternoon at a nearby park, with some walking there and back.

Our times of worship were fruitful with ministry,

Scheduled Meetings for Worship

(For worship at OYM monthly meetings see www.ohiょyearlymeeting.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, 4 PM
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 ; friendrobert61@sbcglobal.net	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	simonw@quaker.org.uk	Weekly/ First Days
Gwinnett	Atlanta, Georgia	Scott King	770-315-9478; a_lang@bellsouth.net	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 Rcquakers@lomaxes.me.uk	First Days, 10:30 AM
Salisbury	Salisbury, Maryland	Kye Parsons	410-749-8221 kyeparsons@hotmail.com	First Days, 1:30 PM
	Little Falls, New York	Geoff Gilmore	315-823-0616 geoff@gsgilmore.com	3rd Fifth Day

Financial Contributions Appreciated

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Editor - Susan Smith, 3876 Hopkins Gap Rd, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 email preferred: tufiyaat@aol.com
Treasurer - Elvina Krekler, 1187 State Hwy 250, Adena, OH 43901
WFCC Committee Convener - Nancy Hawkins, 5190 Kirk Rd, Columbiana, OH 44408

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.

Conservative Friends Gather, *continued from page 1*
particularly messages of repentance, dying to self, and unity in Christ. It was clear even from the first worship time on Sixth Day evening that there was a diversity of gifts represented among us, including preaching, praying, and prophesying. And the gift of hospitality was evident throughout the weekend, as the members of Keystone Meeting gave of themselves to serve those in attendance. Our family noticed that although they accepted and appreciated help with their tasks, it was also clear that they had planned to serve all of us that weekend, and they obliged us to accept their service and allow our feet to be figuratively washed.

Foot-washing was mentioned near the beginning of the weekend when we were addressed by a Keystone member, and that later was echoed when foot-washing was mentioned in an epistle received later that day from Scott King of Georgia. Keystone Meeting did indeed serve the gathering, and they did it with infectious joy.

On First Day morning Steve shared with everyone that Charlotte had told him the night before that she wasn't looking forward to First Day because we would all be leaving. Of course, we did all have to leave, but we took the gift of their hospitality with us.

Mary Ann Savage and family
Scott, Mary Ann, and their children live near McKay, Ohio.

Quakercamp at Stillwater

More than 80 Friends, young and old, from 17 yearly meetings in the US, Canada, and Ireland, gathered in Barnesville, Ohio, this past Sixth Month. The weekend before the Quakercamp was a reunion of former YFNA participants together with a group of Young Adult Friends. Many stayed and more Friends came for the subsequent week, seeking spiritual deepening and renewal.

Although Friends met in the beautiful setting around Stillwater Meetinghouse, they felt intensely the sadness and suffering of a world broken by war, injustice, poverty, hunger, and despair. At the same time, those gathered knew a deep joy in being called corporately to service in God's healing work. At the opening meeting for worship, one Friend prayed that Friends there experience a fresh incursion of the Holy Spirit. The gathering was blessed by just such an incursion again and again.

The Quakercamp's summary epistle observed that

"the heart of Quakerism is in listening and responding to the voice of the Inward Teacher in worship and in shared discernment of God's will." Many participants experienced the Living Christ working in new ways as they engaged in intense study of the scriptures together. Friends from Ohio Yearly Meeting spoke at evening sessions about the spiritual basis of their practices and traditions, and participants were deeply touched.

However, the epistle noted that no branch of Friends "has carried into the present the full revolutionary message and experience of the first generation of Friends" and challenged all Friends "to examine our ...assumptions about what the Holy Spirit is saying .to us." "That spiritual journey will not be easy," the epistle concluded, "but we trust that God will accompany us and will respond to our prayers for help and guidance." A second Quakercamp is being planned for next year.

Adapted from the Quakercamp Epistle to Friends Everywhere

In this Issue

The preceding articles report on two similar-sized gatherings where the work of the Lord was clearly felt. The second event began 300 miles away as the first ended, and only a few Friends attended both. Members of OYM's Friends Center Committee had

been asked by the organizers of the second event to give evening talks on five aspects of Conservative Friends' faith and practice. The remaining articles in this issue are synopses of some of those talks. Those not covered here will occur in a future issue.

The Scriptures As Understood and Used by Conservative Friends

Conservative Friends, like the original Friends, believe that Jesus Christ is the Word of God. We take seriously the verse in the Gospel of John that says, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1: 14) We also believe that the Word of God inspired the writers of the Bible. Conservative Friends, like earlier Friends, often refer to those writings as “scriptures,” the term used by Jesus and by New Testament writers.

Early Friends’ Understanding of the Scriptures

Although by modern standards George Fox had only a rudimentary education, he knew the Scriptures well and used them often in personal study and in his ministry. It is clear that Fox considered not the Bible but Jesus Christ to be the Word of God. In his Epistle 249 Fox declares, “For the Scriptures of Truth are the words of God ... (T)he Word was in the beginning, and Christ’s name is called the Word of God. But Christ is neither called scripture nor writings” Douglas Gwyn, in his *Apocalypse of the Word*, states, “It is perhaps Fox’s most valuable contribution that he rejoins the Spirit and the Word in prophetic experience of the risen Christ. While he presents Jesus Christ as the one Word of God, present and teaching by his Spirit, he places scripture, the historical record of the Word’s work, as the words of God. The true Word is the Christ who is speaking now.”

We should not gather, however, that Fox belittled Scripture. He records in his *Journal* that “I had no slight esteem of the holy scriptures, but they were very precious to me, for I was in that spirit by which they were given forth, and what the Lord opened in me I later found was agreeable to them.” Likewise William Penn, in his *Advice to His Children*, writes “The holy scriptures of Truth were blessed to me.... I charge you to read (the scriptures) daily; the old testament for history chiefly, the psalms for meditation and devotion; the prophets for comfort and hope; but especially the new testament for doctrine, faith and worship.” In his *Apology*, Robert Barclay declares that Friends “value (the scriptures), ... to which...no other writings are to be preferred.” They are “very comfort-

able and necessary to the church of Christ.”

Early Friends held, as Conservative Friends do now, that only through the work of Christ within them can people can understand the truth in Scripture. Referring to the Gospel of John, Fox wrote in his *Journal*, “And I saw that none could read John’s words aright with a true understanding of them, but [i.e., except] in and with the same divine Spirit by which John spoke them, and by his burning shining light which is sent from God.”

Friends can be differentiated from other Christians by where their primary religious authority on earth resides. For Catholics, the institution of the Church has primary authority on earth. For Protestants, the Bible is the primary authority, while for Friends the Spirit of the Living Christ has primary authority.

Barclay argues that Scripture also is a valid source of religious authority, secondary but not in opposition to the Spirit of Christ. Because both the Scriptures and the divine revelations experienced within come from Christ, they are compatible and in unison. Barclay insists that “divine and inward revelations do not and cannot contradict the Scriptures of Truth.” Similarly, “whatsoever doctrine is contrary to (the Scriptures’) testimony may therefore justly be rejected as false.” Barclay affirms that Scripture is of great benefit to Friends seeking to know and follow the Living Word of God. Conservative Friends have maintained that understanding in an unbroken stream from the first Friends.

The Bible among Conservative Friends Today

For present day Conservative Friends, Jesus Christ is an ever-present reality experienced among us as the Living Presence; Christ is the foundation on which we build our faith. Because the Scriptures were inspired by Christ Himself and because Christ remains unchanging (Heb.13:8), the two must agree. Ohio Yearly Meeting Friends value the Scriptures. OYM’s *Book of Discipline* includes this Advice (#16): “Be diligent in the reading of the Bible and other spiritually helpful writings....”

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OYM Friends today use the Bible in many ways:

1. Business sessions begin with a period of waiting worship, followed by a reading from Scripture.
2. Upon the conclusion of each evening program at yearly meeting, a portion of Scripture is read aloud.
3. In our traditional Bible readings, we gather in the presence of the divine Inspiration that gave forth the Scriptures. As different Friends are moved, they select a passage of Scripture and read it aloud, without introduction or explanation, allowing the Word pre-

sent to minister to us about what was just read.

4. Ministry in meeting for worship often includes Scripture as part of the spoken message.
5. Many individuals and families have a regular time for the daily reading of the Bible.
6. Some Meetings have a Bible study group in which a passage is read aloud and discussed a few verses at a time.

John C. Smith

Jack is a member of Rockingham MM, a recorded minister, pharmacist, and part-time university professor. He lives with his wife Susan on their farm near Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Eldering as a Spiritual Gift

“What comes to your mind when you hear the words ‘eldership’ and/or ‘elder’ among Friends?” was the opening query of the fourth “Quaker Camp” evening session led by members of Ohio Yearly Meeting. Ken and Katharine Jacobsen put forth this query because in their travels among Friends they have found disappointingly little interest in and much misunderstanding about the spiritual gift and function of elders. At the same time Ken and Katharine see that many Friends have gifts of eldership without knowing it. These gifts are under-used, and Friends’ organizations everywhere suffer from the lack of members who prayerfully work to keep the channels of God’s love open. The goals of the session, Katharine noted, were 1) to promote an understanding of eldership as the true spiritual gift that it is, and 2) to suggest that effective eldering is as instrumental to the Quaker ideal of sacred community as vocal ministry and/or the meeting of practical needs by overseers.

Friends’ concept of eldership focuses on the spiritual health, the interior Way to and with God, of individuals and their faith communities. Elders have gifts of spiritual discernment and nurture, which are strengthened by learning, practice, and collective discernment with other seasoned members of the meeting. Their means is prayerful listening, deep listening to what is being said by another, by others, or within gatherings for worship, business, clearness etc. where the intention is to seek the Will of God. Whereas the vocal minister gives birth to a message from God, the elder seeks to maintain the right conditions for birth.

A brief look at the history of Friends, Ken Jacobsen

said, reveals that eldership originated among early Friends when traveling ministers asked a seasoned Friend to accompany them to discern when and how their vocal ministry was “of God” and when and how it was not. The gift of this kind of discernment could be found in Friends of all ages. A few Friends today ask others to accompany them when they travel among Friends or when they teach a course or lead a workshop, but this is true only of a few.

Why is the gift of eldership ignored if not avoided? Occasional abuse and general distrust are why, but this is a loss for Friends. All spiritual gifts can be abused. This occurs when Friends try to exercise their gifts in their own strength, not under the “hand of the Lord.” Our history shows cases of spiritual self-righteousness among ministers, overseers and elders; that abuse by elders was deeply injurious.

Eldership is a real gift, however, and if performed faithfully by those who have discerned and practiced their gifts together, it truly keeps the channel of Love to and from God open. Always, the “how” of eldering, the way of nurturing and guiding, must be Love.

The Jacobsens concluded their session by suggesting clues to true eldership: Deep, nonjudgmental listening; prayerful use of intuition; strivings to nurture; questions before opinions; trust of God’s leading; willingness to pray; patience; a concern and feeling for the quality of worship; a valuing of spiritual hospitality for and with others.

Katharine Jacobsen
Ken and Katharine, members of Stillwater MM,
live near Delavan, Wisconsin.

Being a Member of the Meeting

For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another.
Romans 12: 4-5

How can a number of distinct individuals grow in interdependence and become one body, a faith community? Yielding some of one's self is one of the challenges facing most Friends today who set out to fulfill their longing for a close community. In an evening talk at the recent Quakercamp, Frances Taber shed some light on the connection between individuality and community as she reflected on her own experience which, unusually, traces the reverse path: finding individuality through formative membership in Friends community.

Fran grew up in rural Conservative meetings in the 1930's and '40's, where Friends lived their faith in all aspects of life. From very early childhood she sensed that she was an integral part of her extended family and their meeting communities, first in Iowa and then in Ohio. Through traveling ministers and family contacts she became gradually aware of larger circles in the Quaker world. She attended Quaker schools, themselves part of the cohesive Quaker culture where leadership and decisions were group-centered and service was a natural part of adulthood. Her early work experience among Friends extended the pattern of living in relation to a faith community.

Fran learned to be a member of the Friends community not by reading or planning, but by living closely with members who knew and defined it. The meeting's support nurtured her as a child, its standards and ideals shaped her beliefs, and its wisdom continues to play a part in her personal discernment and in her increasing awareness of her own gifts and callings. She, in turn, affected and affects the meeting, both directly as an active member and also through her evolving roles in her family, which is itself a part of the meeting. However, much of her understanding of these intertwined relationships remained implicit well into her adulthood. Not until

she had married Bill, begun raising their family, lived in several college communities, and worked among other Friends was Fran challenged to articulate for herself what it meant to her to be a member of the meeting.

In her talk Fran distinguished between two ways of feeling connected: peoplehood and personhood. Fran first knew herself through peoplehood, a concept similar to what sociologists call "ascribed" identity, "a givenness to who we are through family, religion, and community membership." (Tilden Edwards, *Sabbath Times*, p. 3) Personhood, on the other hand, is similar to "achieved" identity, fostered by modern society's emphasis on individual fulfillment and "defining ourselves (and being defined by others) in terms of what we produce...and consume." (p. 4)

Some years ago Fran realized that her responses to family and community life are different from those of many people around her. She has always felt connected at the level of peoplehood, or ascribed identity. At that level she "can never be isolated, so long as there are other Quakers in the world." She feels "such a deep level of belonging that nothing could possibly undo that belonging." At the level of individual personhood, however, Fran said she can still feel isolated. She has felt challenged "to make the journey to personhood, while, hopefully, retaining my understanding of myself as one of a people, as a member of the meeting...[with my individuality expressed] according to what God might have in mind for ...[my] service...to the corporate whole of the faith community."

In contrast, Fran noted, most twenty-first century American Friends who try to become part of a community have to make the journey in the opposite direction, starting from a sense of personhood refined since childhood and moving to a fuller sense of peoplehood. Fran suggested that "persons who have not started life with the built-in connectedness of peoplehood have a more...complete sense of isolation as individuals, that they may lack an image of

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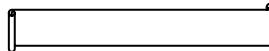
connectedness...from which to build, and that for them the struggle to reach community/koinonia/body of Christ...can be...groping in the dark." Without an internal guiding image with which to recognize and shape community, persons reared primarily as individuals may find themselves struggling with what feels like a loss of identity as they begin to engage in interdependence, whether in marriage, in a family with children, or in a faith community. Too often they seek to resolve that struggle by furthering self-identification separate from the relationship, a process that may lead to marital divorce or departure from the meeting. Indeed, the urge toward individualism has gone so far that some young adults cannot see making space for "us" in their lives even great enough for commitment to one other human being, let alone a whole meeting.

For us as Friends, the need for community follows directly and often insistently from our faith. As Friends we know and experience God's work directly in our individual lives; we know Divine leading and guidance personally. We also believe we are most likely to be authentically directed by God when we discern together as a corporate body. Echoing a theme of Lewis Benson's in *Catholic Quakerism*, Fran used Alan Kolp's words in *Fresh Winds of the Spirit*: The Society of Friends is "one

more movement in God's historic quest to bring a people into relationship with their creator and redeemer... To come to the mountain house of God is not only to come to be in the presence of the Lord but to join the assembly of those who are the Lord's – to be part of a great people gathering ... Nobody more than Friends has stressed that the *ecclesia*, the church, is a body of people."

Fran concluded that many people today know "a longing...for connectedness, for a connectedness that is only complete and fully satisfying when our connectedness with others reflects and grows out of a growing connectedness with God....We hunger to have our longing for God connected with...community-supported rhythms of life which recognize the Being-ness of life (in God) as well as the doing-ness of life (in the world). Our national culture has entirely lost these rhythms, which were a part of common life less than a century ago. We who begin to know our need for them must find them with one another.... What can we do to encourage in ourselves and in our meetings the reality of spiritual membership, so that *all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another*?"

Adapted from a talk by Frances Taber Fran, a member of Stillwater MM, married Richard Simon last year. They live in Barnesville, Ohio.



To the Flock of God

Every one in your measure wait upon God, who is the true Shepherd, and leads his flock into green pastures, and fresh springs he opens daily. This you will see and experience. And mind that which is pure in one another, which joins you together. For nothing will join or make fit...nor unite, nor build but what is pure.

There wait everyone in the measure which God has given you. And none of you be sayers only but do-

ers of the Word. And so, walk in the Truth....Wait upon God for the living Bread that never fades away, which he that eats, lives forever....And you may see from whence your heavenly food comes and grow up by it. ...For the Lord is doing great things to the exaltation of his great Name.

George Fox
Epistle #13 (1652)
In T. Canby Jones' *The Power of the Lord is Over All*

The Conservative Friend
c/o Susan Smith
3876 Hopkins Gap Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Be Still

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am your God.

Be still and listen.

Be still and hear.

Be still and know.

Be still and believe.

Be still and learn.

Be still and be examined.

Be still and change.

Be still and be loved.

Be still and love.

Be still and be comforted.

Be still and be forgiven.

Be still and forgive.

Be still and be led.

Be still and follow.

Be still and do.

Be still and serve.

Be still and give thanks.

Be still and marvel.

Be still and expect.

Be still and be at peace.

Be still and be.

Richard Simon

Richard, a retired nurseryman, is a member of Stillwater MM. These words came to him during his daily quiet time in several parts over a series of days.