

What are we doing here today?

We, as Friends who are leaving NWYM, are gathering to listen, seeking what we are being called by God to do. The leadership of NWYM is offering us help to form a new yearly meeting.

Is that the way forward for us, or does God have other plans?

Who is behind all this?

Fair question.

At MidYear Boards, after being told that four of our NWYM communities were to be set apart to form a new yearly meeting, those involved directly (i.e., reps from Camas, West Hills, Eugene, and Klamath Falls) and those who were interested met briefly and knew we needed to *start meeting regularly to be guided by the Holy Spirit*. Friends from Hillsboro immediately offered their meetinghouse, and this date (Saturday, 2/25) was chosen for the first meeting.

After that, three of us were nudged to begin holding this gathering in our hearts and prayers, listening for what sort of guidance or leadership or planning could or should be offered. We invited others to help us discern, and eventually had a planning session. We wanted there to be the support of *elders* who would be present to accompany anyone in need of solace or guidance; we wanted to have a Friend ready to serve as Clerk if the gathered assembly wanted to do any group discernment or threshing of ideas or write an epistle; we wanted name tags and art supplies and large sheets of paper to put on the walls to hold our dreams and ideas.

What we did NOT want was to have a top-down, hierarchical structure in place. We desire to live into the Quaker tradition, giving room and space and quiet for the Living Christ to be seen and heard.

So that's it. *Our work to prepare this space and time is done*. Now it is the task of you who are here today to listen, to the Lord and to each other, and to begin to lay a foundation for any New Thing that may be our work in the world.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the desert. Isaiah 43:19

Then the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the two ears of every one that hears it will tingle." 1 Samuel 3:11

What is the schedule?

Most of our time will be spent in worship, sometimes programmed with queries and threshing, sometimes open. There will be space available for other ways of processing, including art and one-on-one or small group discussion. We don't really have this planned more than that because we don't know who is coming and thus what is needed.

2:00pm plenary gathering in the main auditorium (upstairs by the kitchen).

5:00 pm potluck meal.

6:00 pm Clean-up; additional volunteers welcome

A Brief Quaker Word List

Quakers over the centuries have developed a technical language, a jargon, finding words as best they could to describe the inward experience of living under the guidance of their Guide. Words matter, and Quakers strive for “plain speech,” saying clearly what we mean. You may hear words today that are either unfamiliar or seem to have a different meaning than you’ve known. **When that happens, feel free to ask what the speaker meant.** The following are words that will likely be used in our gatherings.

waiting worship, open worship, unprogrammed worship, expectant worship

threshing

clerk (noun and verb)

The clerk, first and foremost, is the servant of the meeting. The clerk can set the agenda, but tries valiantly *not to have an opinion* but rather to listen to find the “sense of the meeting.” The clerk should be allowed to control the flow and amount of speech, to call on someone who **perhaps hasn't even stood or raised a hand.** And Friends who do speak during business should address the Clerk, not the assembly. The idea is to speak as we are spoken to by the Holy Spirit, and the Clerk's job is to synthesize, sift, sort, listen, collect... and then give the **sense of the meeting**, which might not have been spoken exactly by any one Friend present.

elder (noun and verb)

queries

concern

Quakers distinguish between *caring about things*, which many of us do about lots of different things, and *having a concern*. A concern is given to one as a particular task, Work for that Friend to do in the world. For example, I may care a lot about modern slavery, but my concern is to work on mitigating the effects of global climate change. As Thomas Kelly said, “We cannot die on every cross; nor are we expected to.”

discernment, clearness

facing bench

gathered meeting

Quakers use this term to describe a meeting for worship that feels especially the Spirit as present, not just to them personally and individually but somehow -- and usually without words or vocal ministry -- to all of them together. This feeling is intuitive, deeper than emotional or physical, but often sensed both by mind and heart, by body and emotions. Evangelicals quote Jesus, "where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them," and understand it to mean that when they purpose to come together, that Jesus will be present. While that is true, perhaps a deeper meaning is to use the verb in the passive aspect: that when we are gathered by God, the Divine will be felt. Thus we don't control the presence of Christ or the Holy Spirit, like a magician releasing a dove from the hat. *This day, may we experience this latter understanding, that God is drawing those She wants, and giving those who will serve as elders the gifts they need; that all of us will experience a gathered meeting with the Presence in our midst.*

leading

plain speech

Saying clearly what we mean.

monthly meeting (also quarterly and yearly meetings)

sense of the meeting

wait upon the Lord

worship sharing

business

faith & practice, book of discipline

Some quotes and suggested readings

If there is one thing that the planners of THIS gathering are clear about, it is that we want to be Quakers, to use all the tools the Early Friends and those who followed have handed down to us. This is because, fundamentally, we believe the Friends have re-captured what was lost by centuries of church hierarchy and power: the original teachings of Jesus about how we are to be when we are together, and when we are doing our work in the world.

QUOTES

We want to share, some of us who felt called to help plan this gathering, a favorite Quaker Quote.

- Julie's: "Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know or to be anything; and sink down to the Seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is its portion." Isaac Penington, 1661

- Helen's: I particularly value this query from Britain Yearly Meeting's F&P: "Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange

or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. *Think it possible that you may be mistaken.*"

- Norma's: "Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand." Isaac Pennington
- Krissi's: "If tea can't fix it, it is a serious problem." Unknown (or every tea drinker)

GOOD READS

Books

Anything by Isaac Pennington, but especially his writings on Unity will be of interest in these days.

The Journal of John Woolman.

The Art of Letting Go by Richard Rohr

Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order, Lloyd Lee Wilson

Listening Spirituality, Volume II Corporate Spiritual Practice Among Friends, Patricia Loring

Blogs: a mix of Evangelical, Liberal, and Conservative Friends' writings

<http://www.quakerjane.com/>

<http://quakeroatslive.blogspot.com>

<http://gatheringinlight.com>

<http://sillypoorgospel.blogspot.com>

<http://robinmsf.blogspot.com>

<https://amorvincat.wordpress.com>