

**Clerk's Call to
2016 PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING ANNUAL SESSION
Walker Creek Ranch
Friday, June 17 to Wednesday, June 22**

LIFTING OF THE VEIL

“Now if any, . . . , feel a secret touch upon their hearts, startling them, and giving some testimony to the truth, though very small, and through a thick, dark covering, there is that to which I speak; there is the witness within the veil; and there is the testimony rising up, which leads to life, if given heed to. “

~ Isaac Penington, “The Way of Life and Death”

Please join us for Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 70th annual session June 17 to June 22 at Walker Creek Ranch, Petaluma, California. We are opened, strengthened and comforted when we join one another in this centuries-old Friends practice of gathering as a Yearly Meeting body.

Early Friends believed in the presence of a Living Spirit and knew that it was veiled, in other words, Spirit was not typically seen or understood in our habitual behaviors and thoughts. It was often described as a “still small voice”. In my experience it is in our bodies that we experience the Spirit which exposes the veil. We can feel Spirit in our bodies and these sensations can help us develop a barometer to understand the authenticity of spirit that leads us – Quakerism, in my experience, is a visceral religion.

When we try to rationalize and limit ourselves to only what fits our intellectual understanding, Spirit loses the capacity to guide and direct us through experience. Quakerism is a religion that is embodied and practiced. It requires us, first, to wake up to both the temptations and inherent assumptions of the dominant culture, and our personal habits which hide our inner wounds, even from ourselves. The process of aligning oneself to the spirit requires the Lifting of the Veil and seeing things as they truly are – both internally and around us. As early Friends practiced this life changing endeavor they were led to practices that were revealed by the Truth. This included, for example, refusing to tip their hats or saying Thee and Thou to landed gentry – which implied inequality amongst people – and other outward actions that sometimes put them in harm’s way as a consequence of their testifying to the revealed truth.

Come to the Annual Session with your minds open, with a yearning for wonder. Come ready to witness that the mystery unfolds when we open our hearts to each other and sit waiting to be guided by the presence that is always there, but not always perceived, when we gather with the intention to listen deeply. The spirit guides us when we seek it.

Our keynote plenary will have two of our own leading us into worship: Carl Magruder and Darcy Stanley. The spirit we seek is more concentrated and intense when we are in a large group and are focused on contemplative practices. Please be prepared to practice waiting to minister verbally only when you are genuinely moved by spirit and have tested your message by holding it and allowing it to dissipate if it is meant to. The signs of ministry are likely to manifest physically and will persist such that you can no longer hold it in. Take care that it is not intellect, ego or unresolved personal pain, but the Light at work in you, that lifts you from your seat and provides you with words.

“The sooner we stop thinking *we* are the energetic operators of religion and discover that God is at work, as the Aggressor, the Invader, the Initiator, so much the sooner do we discover that our task is to call us to *be still and know*, listen, hearken in quiet invitation to the subtle promptings of the Divine...I am persuaded that religious people do not with sufficient seriousness count on God as an active factor in the affairs of the world. ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock,’ but too many well-intentioned people are preoccupied with the clatter of effort to do something *for* God that they don’t hear her asking that she might do something *through* them.”

~Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion

Be aware, Friends, that this annual session is scheduled differently. Business sessions are being reimagined with initiatives, such as reports being posted not read aloud, leaving more time to allow spirit to rise and guide us. Furthermore, the first day of Annual Session will be on Friday and the last day will be on Wednesday. We know that many work and may not have a full week off, so we hope that you can come at least for the weekend if not the full five days. The Meeting for Memorials will be held earlier than usual, during the weekend, so that more people can attend.

When we open ourselves to Spirit together, we can expect the unexpected. I hope that you are able to join us for this year’s Annual Session.

In the Light,

Diego Navarro, Presiding Clerk

For more information on the theme “Lifting of the Veil” please follow the links below:

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa0YeoWrPe8>

Document: <https://westernfriend.org/media/veil-shadow-and-abundant-life>