

## **Lifting the Veil on the Peace Testimony Among PYM Friends**

It is hard to assess how the Peace Testimony is faring among Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends since attendance at PSO's monthly conference calls has dwindled to two or three besides the clerk and co-clerk, and very few reports have been received from our email blasts to clerks of Peace Committees. Some Peace Committees have been laid down. Appointed members of the PSO Committee have mostly not taken part in our calls. No minutes of concern have come to our attention, except for a minute on "Living Sustainably" from the FWCC World Plenary in Peru. The good news is that individual meetings and individual Friends are active in peace and social concerns (some doing extraordinary work), but we are not collaborating or communicating very well as a community of Friends.

It is worth noting that the theme of this year's Yearly Meeting, "Lifting the Veil," is related to the word "Revelation" (*Apocalypsis* in Greek), which means "to uncover or lift the veil." The Book of Revelation was written when Christians were living under oppression and persecution during the dark days of the Roman Empire. Its coded message was that the spirit of Christ would prevail over the forces of empire—a message that early Friends took to heart, often at great personal risk. Experiencing the living Christ as their Teacher and Guide, George Fox and early Friends struggled so that there would be a "new Jerusalem," God's beloved community, on earth as it is in heaven.

Some questions arise: Do Friends still believe that it is possible to transform our culture and system of war into a culture and system of peace? What sacrifices are we willing to make for the sake of justice and peace?

In our dark times there are some glimmerings of light and hope among Friends. Here are a few examples:

**Orange Grove Meeting** has a thriving Peace and Social Concerns Committee with adult studies on peace and social justice topics, and two members attending the FCNL Quaker lobby day. Orange Grove Friends approved minutes on the refugee crisis (endorsing FCNL's position) and the "Facing the Climate Crisis" minute approved by Pacific YM.

**Claremont Meeting** has demonstrated extraordinary stewardship and concern for the poor and the environment. They host a dozen homeless people in their Meetinghouse every night of the year and have helped birth the

“Claremont Homeless Advocacy Program” that involved the Claremont community provides homeless people with wrap-around services. They also installed solar panels and partnered with a local group that plants fruit trees sustainably. They have reduced their water use by replacing lawns with permaculture berms and swales that capture rainwater for these trees.

**Santa Cruz** had laid down its Peace Committee but it was resurrected through the efforts of committed Friends. A retreat was held to help discern what Santa Cruz Friends care most deeply about. Adult studies were organized to explore these concerns. And the Peace Committee is now thriving again. How was this accomplished? We are eager to learn more and to help other Meetings to do likewise.

**Strawberry Creek Meeting** had many adult education forums (climate change Paris COP20, solitary confinement, Quaker Bolivia tour, etc.), participated in climate change events, and raised and distributed Dime-A-Gallon grants re environment. It considered Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Priorities for 2017 and recommended focusing 1) on climate change that includes justice and sustainability concerns, 2) on economic equity that would include Native American, immigration, and racial justice concerns, and 3) on peacebuilding that includes efforts toward nuclear disarmament. Strawberry Creek Friends also approved signing an interfaith petition to the President and Congress asking for "legally binding solutions that reduce national greenhouse gas emissions" and providing "poor and vulnerable communities here and abroad support to build low carbon and climate-resilient societies."

Other Meetings may have engaged in peace-related actions but have not reported them to the clerk of PSO. The co-clerks of PYM-PSO urge Peace Committees of every Meeting to report their activities to us so we can share this news and encourage others.

In many Meetings individual Friends are doing good work for peace and justice with the support of "anchor" or accountability committees, while others are working without their Meeting support, for various reasons. For example, **David Hartsough** of San Francisco Meeting toured the country with his remarkable memoir "Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Nonviolent Activist" and has been invited to go to Russia this summer to follow up on peace activities he undertook there in the 1960s. Unable to give the interest group on ending war that he had planned to lead at our annual session, David writes:

"We live at a time the US and Russia are threatening nuclear war and we are closer to nuclear war than at any time since the Cuba missile crisis, when we are bombing seven Muslim countries and in full scale war with three - Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, when the US has over one hundred military bases in countries all over the world and the US spends ever more hundreds of billions for war and preparations for war while we skimp on funds for education for our children, affordable healthcare for all, adequate housing for our people and making the transition to a renewable energy society and world . How can Friends begin making a much clearer statement to the world with our words and our lives that we must end our addiction to the insanity of war and militarism?"

**Jim Summers** of La Jolla Meeting has been involved in an exciting project with Veterans for Peace: the re-launching of the Golden Rule, a ship that a Quaker named Albert Bigelow intended to sail into the forbidden nuclear test zone in 1958, and is now on a new mission for peace.

Questions worth exploring: Why are Friends reluctant to turn to their Meeting for support when they have a concern for peace and justice? How can we encourage individual Friends to work together as a community for peace and justice, under the care of their Meeting and of the Spirit?

The PSO Committee has sponsored the following interest groups with both local and global concerns:

**How are Friends Helping and Serving the Community?** David Brietzmann and Linnea Hanson are surveying Friends Meetings of Pacific Yearly Meeting to find out how meetings are serving and helping their communities. Their interest group will highlight some of the different ways that meetings are providing service. They would like to develop a spreadsheet that can be posted on the Western Friend website for all Friends to use to post their service activities. FCNL (Friends Committee on National Legislation) and FCL-CA (Friends Committee on Legislation—California) lobby to influence elected officials at the federal and state levels and often make ballot recommendations for us. This interest group will focus on and train us to influence our local governments, especially our school boards. Friends will also get information on campaigning for like-minded candidates and/or running for office. Conveners: David Brietzmann (San Francisco Meeting) and Linnea Hanson (Chico Meeting).

**Friends Peace Teams.** FPT works for peace in many parts of the world. San Diego Meeting just gave FPT Peace in Latin America a grant to help with its

work. FPT Asia West Pacific is establishing a Peace Center in Pati, Indonesia, where people from Asia West Pacific come to a yearly conference to learn about AVP and peaceful development. The African Great Lakes Initiative is working to hold together the peace in Burundi which is unstable because the President wants an unconstitutional 3rd term. Convener: Gay Howard (Central Coast).

**67 Sueños Collective.** The Oakland-based "67 Sueños Collective" ("67 Dreams," after the 67 percent of young people who would not be affected by the DREAM Act) holds monthly encounters or "Encuentros" with undocumented youth from across the Bay Area. The focus is to build solidarity, and to record their testimonies/stories in hopes to build awareness about the issues they face and to bear witness to their American experience. Convener: AFSC.

**Open Your Eyes to the Wider World of Quakers: Report on the FWCC Plenary in Peru.** Are you curious about Quakers from all over the world? What's it like to worship with over 325 Quakers from 37 countries? We are the children of God. We are who creation has been waiting for. We are called to reveal ourselves in our lives and in the work we do with our hearts and our hands. Although God can fill our hearts, God has no hands but ours to heal this broken world. We can be salt and light shining to the world and declaring the love of God. Conveners: Anthony Manousos (Orange Grove Meeting), Jan Turner (Humboldt Meeting), Hulda Muaka (Palo Alto), Janet Leslie (Chico) and Roena Oesting (La Jolla).

**The 2016 FWCC Gathering in Peru and the Sustainability Minute.** Presentations by PYM Friends who took part in this world-wide Quaker gathering, which unanimously agreed on a sustainability minute calling for specific actions by individuals and meetings. What does this minute, and the work of FWCC, mean for the Society of Friends? This minute calls for specific actions by individuals and meetings. How can Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends best respond to this call? Conveners: FWCC reps, QEW, and PSO.

**A final note of hope, and a challenge:** Friends throughout the world are now united around two Testimonies: Peace and Sustainability. Friends may differ theologically and culturally, we may have different approaches to worship, but we feel a unifying spirit that calls us to care for our earth and for those who are suffering from the effects of war and climate disruption. For this reason, PSO, FWCC and QEW have worked together to lift up FWCC's minutes on Sustainability, Eco-justice and Peace that Friends world-wide are taking to

heart. We are calling upon our Yearly Meeting to take two concrete actions that demonstrate our commitment to sustainability. The earth is in crisis, and we are urging our Yearly Meeting to act now.