

Clerk's Call to the 77th Annual Session of Pacific Yearly Meeting

Rabbi Nahum Ward-Lev is an author and teacher who has thought deeply about the liberating and healing path of the prophets. He writes:

In the prophetic worldview, God supports falling forward, mistake-ridden risk-taking, and boundary crossing for the sake of growth in consciousness and relationship. The prophets perceive God as energizing this journey, animating all life forms to bring forth new ways, to explore new relationships.

Building on annual session 2022, the theme for annual session 2023 will be “**Beloved Community Part II: Centering the Voices of the Next Generation.**”

George Fox was 28 years old in 1652, opening for anyone who would listen the understanding that “Jesus has come to teach his people himself.” In other words, we can have a direct relationship to God/Spirit/Whatever you call its name, without intermediaries, rituals, or dogma. We are an experimental faith tradition. And the source of those revelations has very often come from the youngest among us. The Valiant Sixty, as the band of early adherents was called, were largely young people, some still in their teens. They were subjecting themselves to serious persecution, including death, and they were attracting huge numbers of followers. Who are these prophets among us today? What can we learn from them?

In 2022, one-third of the people who were able to join the gathering in person were under 35. They are on fire. They feel an urgency that sometimes dims as we grow older. The times we face could hardly be more serious. What changes might we need to make to find our prophetic voices again?

Thistle Hofvendahl and Diego Navarro recently wrote an article for the October 22, 2022 electronic issue of *Friends Journal* (www.friendsjournal.org/sacred-space) subtitled “Supporting Spiritual Gifts Informed by Oppression,” in which they “noticed how our socially marginalized identities have shaped our understanding of the Truth...Friends from oppressed groups may bring ministry that challenges the status quo.”

Although Friends have been concerned about our relationship to the natural world for decades, it seems to take a Greta Thunberg to command worldwide attention. So I invite us to turn our attention to our own young prophetic voices, whatever topics they identify for us right now – climate, race, membership in the Religious Society of Friends...

Fr. Richard Rohr, of the Center for Action and Contemplation tells us: “*The prophetic stream supports learning, the evolution of life toward greater consciousness, and every movement toward justice and communal well-being. At the same time, the prophetic stream offers healing waters when we become aware of our mistakes, cleansing waters that enable us to learn from our mistakes and to move forward.... All we need to perceive is the direction of the journey—toward mutual relationship—and the next step in that direction....*”

Returning to Thistle and Diego, we are told *“Friends can’t simply welcome people into our meetinghouses and expect them to know the unwritten rules of etiquette and feel comfortable with us. We need to collaboratively design a bigger house where our focus is on revealing the Truth, where we all are enriched and invited to be uncomfortable.”*

Although the Valiant Sixty were primarily focused on evangelizing a new understanding of the role of the Church, and the direct relationship to Spirit, they simultaneously worked with people of all walks of life, all ages, genders, and levels of educational attainment. We have known that real risk-taking requires a spiritual foundation. Let’s build that together.

“We have inherited a large house, a great world house in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterner and Westerner, gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interests, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.” Martin Luther King, 1967

Laura Magnani, Presiding Clerk