

Quaker Speak

Weekly Videos. Vital Ministries.

Transcript and Discussion Questions
Season 2



A Project of FRIENDS
JOURNAL

Directed by Jon Watts

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I. Welcome to Season 2

TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to Quaker Speak!

Quaker Speak is a weekly video series on YouTube where we explore Quaker experience and action by introducing you to people with vital ministries.

Our 48 videos in Season 1 touched on topics ranging from “the history of plain speech” to “racism and the blessed community” to “what to expect in Quaker meeting for worship”.

We can be playful too, like our video about the Quaker Problems Meme.

We are excited to be embarking on our second season.

There are many things that will feel familiar in Season 2, to fans of Season 1. You can still expect a new video every Thursday, for example. And we’re also mixing things up a bit. We have some fun new video ideas in the works and we also have some exciting new partnerships to announce.

Before we announce those, I want to tell you that you can browse all of our videos at our website, ***QuakerSpeak.com***.

The simplest way to keep up with the QuakerSpeak project is by subscribing. When you subscribe to QuakerSpeak, you’ll get a weekly email with our newest video.

You can also follow us on Twitter, and like our page on Facebook.

Quaker Speak is a project of *Friends Journal*, a monthly Quaker magazine in print and online. Subscriptions are just \$28 a year for new subscribers.

This year, QuakerSpeak is partnering with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a Quaker lobby in the public interest. Quaker lobbyists are on Capitol Hill every day working for a more just and peaceful world. [Click here](#) to find out what’s happening and how you can get involved.

We’re also working with American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice as a practical expression of faith in action.

My name is Jon Watts and I am the director of the QuakerSpeak project.

As always, we appreciate your engagement. We work hard on each week’s video, so leave us a comment and let us know what you thought!

Thanks for watching! See you on Thursday!

2. How Quakers Got Their Name

TRANSCRIPT

It's not unlike how people will take a pejorative term and own it, take pride in it. Methodists, Mormons, there are other words that ethnic groups will use that were initially used as pejorative terms and they claimed them with pride.

How Did Quakers Get Their Name?

Initially, it was a pejorative term. Friends (Quakers) initially called themselves Publishers of Truth, Friends of Jesus, Primitive Christianity Restored or Revived. They simply saw themselves as a movement restoring original Christianity.

Early on, there were those who accused Quakers of being enthusiasts, of outrunning their guide. One of the first instances of that was in Fox's first imprisonment when he was thrown into prison by a judge up in Darby, England. The judge bade Fox to tremble and quake at the authority of the court, and Fox replied, "No, it is thou, judge, who ought tremble and quake before the authority almighty God." And the judge said, "What are you some sort of QUAKER??" (enthusiast, what we today might call some "wild eyed Pentecostal") and the name stuck as a pejorative term. It was not meant to be taken in good light by others.

Named It and Claimed It

Quakers (Friends) took it on themselves. They named it and claimed it; said, "yeah we're Quakers! We're moved by the Spirit." In their meetings for worship they would tremble and quake and shake. They would often cite scriptural evidence for that. How when the reach of Elohim, or the spirit of God descended on the prophets or others in the days of old in the Hebrew scriptures or the Christian scriptures, they would tremble and shake. They would often use that as proof texts, "We are Quakers."

So Quakers claimed it and eventually when they eventually became known as the religious society of Friends, they would also add on "Also known as Quakers" or "(Quakers)"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Sometimes signs at Quaker Meetings will say Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). What does your Meeting sign say? What should it say?*
2. *How does what we call ourselves influence who we are and what others think of us?*

3. Why I Cried the First Time I Went to Quaker Meeting

TRANSCRIPT

So the first time that I went to Quaker Meeting, to visit West Hills, I pulled up—I was running a little bit late actually and so I was planning on just sneaking in the back—but I get up to the door and, probably one of the most mystical experiences of my life: I just started crying. I hadn't heard anyone talk, I hadn't had my hand shaken yet. I was just crying.

How I Found Friends (And What I Found There)

My name is A.J. Mendoza. I'm part of West Hills Friends Church in Portland, OR. I went to George Fox University, which is an evangelical Quaker school just outside of Portland. I started working a lot of with the LGBTQ students there, and while the school only has about a 3% Quaker student population, overwhelmingly the straight allies who would show up were Quaker, so that left me with a really big question mark: why are these the people that are showing up?

I think the first time I realized there were so many Quakers in the club was we had to make some sort of a decision and I don't remember what it was at the time, but somebody said, "Why don't we take a vote on that?" and there was kind of a wash of uncomfortability, and I was like, "What is that all about?" My friend leans over and was like, "Uh, a lot of the people in this room are Quaker and we tend to not vote." I was like, "Oh. News to me!" So that was kind of my initial introduction to Quakers.

Finding a Meeting

I sent an email to a guy at my Yearly Meeting, asked if I could have coffee with him and he said that there's actually one monthly meeting in Northwest Yearly Meeting that has minuted being welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ people, and I was like, "Woah. Welcoming and affirming? Northwest Yearly Meeting? I know George Fox University as a school. . . not so generally an accepting place." And so I had to see this.

I had to see this and it was going to be very academic. I was going to walk in, sit politely through the service because I hadn't been to church in like, 4 years. After the service was over, find the pastor, shake his hand and say, "Well thank you for being welcoming, and good day to you." So that was my intention.

And I pulled up there on a Sunday morning and started walking towards the meeting house. Before I even got in the door or heard a single person talk, just started crying. Just tears. It felt like my soul coming home after a really long time being away.

Then I sat through that meeting just, "guuuuhhh" in the back, and came back the next Sunday and the Sunday after that, and now I'm a member.

God is Still Speaking

I think what has resonated most with me about Quakerism is that idea that God is still speaking and is present now, and there's equal access to that. That was not my experience of faith or my understanding of it growing up. God was locked away, and some people knew, and some people didn't, and there were lots of rules. Quakerism just shakes up rules and I love that so much.

I love that the Jesus that I was sold as a kid that is exclusive and condemning is not the Jesus that I think existed at all. That's not a God that I can relate to.

The God that wasn't well liked by people, that was kind of hated, the Jesus that stood in front of people who were about to hurt another person, that's a Jesus that interests me.

Being able to live into that faith, not as a spiritual refugee, but as an equal. It's been really incredible. Really healing, actually.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *What was your first experience ever at Quaker Meeting? What were you thinking? How did it feel?*
2. *What is the most emotional experience you have had in Meeting for Worship? How did you express it?*

4. The Difference Between Quaker Meeting and Other Christian Services

TRANSCRIPT

We don't believe we're going to get the final answers, and therefore in one sort of curious way, we might say that the silence of our worship is not only the medium to approach God, but it is also possibly the best response to the Divine.

Our vocal ministry adds to the silence, but in the end, we're left with the silence—with that sense of connection with the presence that we find in and through our silent meetings.

The Difference Between Quaker Meeting and Other Christian Services

I think one of the core insights of Quakers in the 20th century has been an increasing caution around theology, so that we're necessarily a little bit suspicious about tying God down too much, about becoming too detailed about the nature of God—too doctrine-centric, if you like.

So we could say that we're part of a tradition of open, expectant waiting. We go into the silence and stillness—in a sense, we're making a grand claim that we can just have this direct connection with God without the help of any minister or text or outward form of liturgy. But we do have a liturgy; it's a silent liturgy.

And we've found over the centuries that we have a very strong sense of presence that comes through absence. We can say that absence leads to a sense of presence.

Ideally, we'll have some dramatic, radical sense of encounter in the silence. We may or may not minister. We may give vocal ministry or we might not, but we're then left with this sense of encounter but without necessarily a very clear way of talking about it. So we're not going to then formulate that into a spoken creed or a liturgical form. Our liturgy is inward, and it's one of exploration and one of seeking.

A "Seeking" Faith Community

It is one of the divisions between Friends worldwide, but in my tradition, then, certainly we're clear that we need to be a little bit hesitant about trying to become too detailed or too focused on the exact nature of God.

There was a recent article by Harvey Gillman in *The Friend* that said, "Even the term 'God' is not the name for God." We struggle with the words, we're trying to get close to the experience, but we know that somehow we won't match the depth of experience.

So I think one of the ways we can think about Quaker Meeting would be in terms of being part of a seeking faith community. So one of the differences, say, between Quaker Meeting and other Christian services is that we're really not sure. We're not sure of what we're going to experience in Meeting, and we're also—in some curious way—not particularly sure about what it is we're finding in our experience.

I think this should be tremendously popular in today's society. There's a lot of people out there who are spiritually hungry who may be slightly cautious about organized religion, and what we as Quakers are offering is a space in which to explore our spirituality. We do have boundaries around it, we have particular ways of doing things, we have keen insights into practice as it were, but we offer a huge amount of space to allow people to explore their journey, and I suppose that's one of the main differences. We're not offering clear answers, but we're trying to ask the right questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *What do you think Ben Pink Dandelion means when he says that "God is not the name for God?"*
2. *Ben says that Friends' liturgy is inward and doesn't get formulated into spoken creeds. Do you agree? Where do you think this comes from and what is its impact?*

5. How Jesus Affirms My Queerness

TRANSCRIPT

Jesus affirms: a summary of the scriptures is “Love the lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and with all your strength and love thy neighbor as thyself.”

If that’s really the summary of everything that’s in there, then I test that against my experience of love working in the world, and I’ve seen that love working in all sorts of relationships and through all sorts of people, and there’s nothing in my experience now that makes me think that queer relationships are manifestations of God’s love any less than straight relationships.

How Jesus Affirms My Queerness

My name is Kody Hersh. I live in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia and I still have membership in the Meeting that I grew up in in Miami, Florida, Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

I call myself queer even though I know that that’s a challenging word for some folks—especially people of a different generation that I am—because it’s important to me that that term feels like it has space, both for the complexity of how I experience my sexuality and the fact that I experience my sexuality as in resistance to a lot of cultural norms and expectations about what that’s supposed to look like.

And something that’s really affirming for me as a Christian is looking at the life of Jesus and the amount of time that Jesus spent with people who were on the fringes of the culture that he was embedded in, that he really sought out the people who weren’t the most privileged or the most respected or the most appropriate people for him to hang out with, and that’s powerful for me.

Also, the fact that God, seeking to have a human experience, would choose to have that human experience embodied as someone who was born to a mother who was not supposed to be bearing children, given her relationship status and cultural status, born to somebody in a situation of not just poverty, but imperial impression in Palestine—that that was the human experience that God chose to have to me is a really powerful message, a really exciting message.

What all of that together means to me, Jesus seeking to hang out with outcasts and God embodying in a kind of marginalized human form, is that it’s not just that the Kingdom of God includes everybody, even folks at the margins. It’s that the kingdom of God includes everybody, especially folks at the margins.

If you don’t quite fit in the structures of this world, if you find yourself in conflict and resistance with them, if you find that the power structures of this world shut you out from a lot of resources or authority or self-determination, you are a central figure in the kingdom of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Kody Hersh points out that Jesus hung out with people on the margins of society. Based on his example, how should Christians today behave?*
2. *Kody says, “it’s not just that the Kingdom of God includes everybody, even folks at the margins. It’s that the Kingdom of God includes everybody, especially folks at the margins.” What does this mean to you?*

6. Why Quaker Worship Shouldn't Be Limited to Sunday Morning

TRANSCRIPT

I think that when we say yes to God in our conviction, we are saying no to Caesar. And most of us, including myself, still live by Caesar's clock, which is our work day, our soccer practices, our meetings with therapists, all of which are good things. We should be in therapy if we need to be in therapy. We should bring the kids to soccer practice if the kids are supposed to be in soccer practice. But the question continues to resound: what are we ordered under? Are we ordered under the world, or are we ordered under God?

Worship Isn't Just for Sunday Morning.

My understanding is that part of the original openings that became our monthly meetings was this impulse—this impetus—to step away from the steeple houses (the churches) and away from a special Sunday morning time with the family to an opening into the constant practice of living into that kingdom of God.

And so that meant that we had these things traditionally called opportunities, so when we met by the well, if it was time to have some worship because we saw in each other's eyes it was time for worship, well then we worshiped at the well. Where two or more are gathered, right?

If the baker was a Friend and I was going to buy some bread in the bakery and we got into a time to worship, then it was time to worship.

Now, is that romanticized? Of course. People are people; we've been clay-footed. It doesn't matter whether you're a Quaker or not. But I do think that that mentality—which is that at any moment in time we could be caught up in this moment of realization that it's time to worship—has largely been lost, and I think it's too bad. I love worshipping in public. I love having long extended graces in restaurants. I've worshiped in lots of different places and it's beautiful because it carves out our lives in a way that makes us remember whose we are and what we're for.

Does that mean that I've turned my life over and have come up through the flaming sword and have no sin? Hell no, it doesn't mean that. But I do think that we can practice having the world's idea of worship being on Sunday go away so that worship happens when worship is supposed to happen.

We don't initiate worship. God initiates worship, and we respond. To say that it only happens at a certain time on Sunday I think misses the idea and the impetus of the power of our worship, which is that we are, in our human-ness, responding to this divine invitation, which is always at work. Not just when the bell hits ten on Sunday morning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Have you ever experienced the kind of "opportunity" that Callid is talking about, where worship came to you unplanned?*
2. *What do you think of the distinction that Callid makes between being ordered under the world or ordered under God? What is a time when you felt ordered under God?*

7. Guided By an Inner Truth: Hip-Hop Artist Sterling Duns

TRANSCRIPT

*I put my life on pause, rewind, now I'm pressing play.
Then come up,
grinding until the sun up,
knowing it could all be gone if one person puts their guns up.
A black Quaker no savior, I'm on my Bayard Rustin*

I really feel like, in a lot of ways, that the lyrics that come to me, I really do feel like I'm just a vessel. I'm just somebody being used to spread messages of love and growth and empathy.

Title

My name is Sterling Duns. I'm from West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and I attend Merion Meeting in Merion, PA, so not too far from West Philly.

I went to public school for all my life up until the 9th grade. My Mom had heard about a scholarship program at Friends Central School right outside of West Philly so I went there for 4 years. It was a very transformative experience. One of the most life changing moments was when I was 14 I went down to the American Friends Service Committee and sat down in a room, 14, and someone came in and was like, "Alright, we're going to write holiday letters to death row inmates."

And I was like, "How do I even comprehend what I'm doing? What this means?"

And that seed was planted. It's serendipitous, it's the universe, but little did I know, 13 years later I'd be working on prison reform in our country and really trying to educate myself and others about the prison system in this country.

Writing Poetry as a Spiritual Discipline

I feel like I've been writing hip hop verses or rapping for as long as I can remember, but I think when I got to college I really started to hone in on rapping and crafting my skills. I was an English major and poetry minor. I got my masters in poetry. Definitely having the opportunity to find my voice through poetry has influenced the hip hop that I do, and it's been such a gift. It's so cathartic for me—hip hop specifically—it's this way that I use to speak my truth.

I think being patient with yourself, which I learned a lot through Quaker Meeting—has been really important in music. I'll write something down, and want it to be finished right then and then. And I'm like, "I can't force this."

I think in a similar way, when sitting in Meeting, you could be grappling with something and you want resolution right then and there, knowing that it's all about the process. It's not about finding all the answers right in that moment. And you may come back a week later or a month later, and somebody will share a message and you're like, "Oh, that's exactly what I needed to hear."

Guided By An Inner Truth

Quakers are constantly searching and re-defining what it means to really just embody Light and see that of God in everyone. You really are able to ask yourself some deep questions and be introspective and then from that introspection, I love the aspect of really dedicating yourself to social justice issues. That's one of the things

that really drew me to Quakerism. The spirituality, but also this action. You can't just sit in the Meeting room and think about things, and then once you get out of there, you know, "my job's done for the day."

I was asking myself these questions about what's going on in the world and what's my place in it all, and do I have a place in it all? And you know, the way was open and opportunities came up for me to put into practice things that I really felt deep in my core, and next thing I knew I was at Quaker Meeting every Sunday and I was helping to organize different learning opportunities around the prison system and doing work around education reform and playing music that had to do with social justice issues. Things just started to open up because I really started listening and being guided by this inner truth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Sterling compares the process of making music with sitting faithfully in Meeting for Worship. Do you have other activities in your life that you feel Quaker Meeting has helped prepare you for?*
2. *Sterling describes having the experience at a young age of writing letters to prisoners with the American Friends Service Committee, which opened him up to a path of social justice. What experiences did you have when you were younger that planted the seeds for things that you are passionate about today?*

8. Why Climate Change Is an Issue of Faith: Quakers Lobby Congress

TRANSCRIPT

Climate change isn't coming. . . . it's already here.

I came to Washington, DC from Durango, Colorado. . . Portland, Oregon. . . Miami, Florida. . . from Lincoln, Nebraska. . . to ask Senator Ron Wyden. . . Representatives Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio. . . Senators Wedman and Murkley. . . and ask for a public, bipartisan acknowledgment of the fact that our climate is changing.

Climate Change Affects Us All.

Jodi Geddes: I think many ways when I think about my community in Brooklyn, NY, especially amongst black and brown populations, climate change is super intense, just because of CO2 emissions in the air.

Lasheena Taft: I live right off the water. I get to see that go up. I get to hear about people in my community, in my neighborhood—talking about, “what are we going to do if this rises drastically in the next 20, 30, 40 years?”

Adam Theeson-Fenton: We have to do water restrictions, the farmers can only water once every week, maybe once every two weeks.

Treston Owens: We have a lot of floods in Miami when it rains and because of high tide, and actually my city's going to flood and be destroyed.

Let's #TalkClimate

Lasheena Taft: Looking at what is going on with our planet, the really frustrating element to me is not necessarily that our government moves slowly as it is that we are not acknowledging something that is obviously, scientifically documented to be happening. And there are folks who can't even use the word “climate change” because it triggers all these issues of dogma and position and posturing.

Joey Hartmann-Dow: It's not a party issue. And politics tear us apart trying to fight with each other, and this is affecting literally every human being and creature on the Earth.

Simon Elliot: It's very important to work across the lines and to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to see the light and God in every other person.

An Issue of Faith

Ally Clendineng: In Genesis, God creates the Earth and commands us to be good stewards of his creation, and I feel that we have not done that.

Tyler Maybury: I think the uniquely Quaker aspect that calls me to care about climate change is a sense of urgency that rises from us. The same that makes John Woolman care about his friends keeping slaves. It's the same urgency that I feel about people on the other side of the planet not having enough food or my neighbors in the midwest having worse weather.

Lasheena Taft: This is an issue of stewardship. This is an issue of peace. This is an issue of morality. This is an issue of responsibility.

Gabrielle Hammons: Just the part about love and just saying, “We may disagree, but we can still talk about it. We can still just be humans after it and not have any harsh feelings towards each other.”

Lasheena Taft: I get to be one of the first people in my Meeting who is sponsored to go to a National event. They are fully funding my trip to come here. They are incredibly supportive. Amazingly, wonderfully supportive of me being here. I am going to do a talk the Sunday that I get back and everyone in my Meeting has approached me and said, "We are so excited to hear about what you're going to do in DC. What your experience was like. We can't wait to be there for this." And it blew my mind and it opened my heart and it made me cry. That's why I get to be here. Because my Meeting cares about this, and because I care about this.

Lobbying with Friends

Ally Clendinning: I am excited and a little bit nervous. It is my first time to go to Congress and to lobby, so . . . brand new here. But I'm mostly just excited. I think it will be a really good experience.

Treston Owens: It was good to actually come here and lobby because when you see lobbying, you think of big money like the Koch brothers, things like that. But citizen lobbying, you don't really hear about that. So actually getting to do it was a great experience.

Scott Greenler: I'm really glad that FCNL brought me here along with some of my fellow students to come speak to my members of congress. It makes me feel like I'm actually making a difference in one of the biggest issues that's facing our country today.

Joey Hartmann-Dow: It makes me feel hopeful that so many young people are here talking to the people who are supposed to lead us and represent us. I've lobbied with my senators already and they've said, "Yeah. We want to hear from our constituents. That's how we know what to do." And even if it seems like on paper, they are disagreeing with you, it feels good to hear them say that. That gives me the inspiration to go home and tell my friends, "Let's write some letters and emails!" They want to hear from us. They need to hear from us. That's their job.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How is climate change and issue of Faith?*
2. *Have you ever lobbied your representative? On what issue? How did it go?*

9. Christ Has Come to Teach Us Himself

TRANSCRIPT

My name is Colin Saxton, and I'm the general secretary of Friends United Meeting, and I live here in Richmond, Indiana, which is the world headquarters for F.U.M.

I wasn't born in the Quaker community, and so I came to it late, in my mid-twenties. I experienced fellowship and worship and service in other denominations before that. But I was on this search for something that was just a little bit different. I longed to find this group of people that would help me experience a more vital Christianity than I was experiencing—than I was experiencing anyway—in other places.

One of the things that drew me to Friends, and I think makes us a little bit unique or distinct, is our profound and absolute conviction that Christ is real to us, that he's present in our midst, and at our best it has profound implications for us in not only our personal lives, but the ways that we live as a community. So it makes us unique or distinct in the way in which we worship, and creating those opportunities for us to step outside of our regularly scheduled program and allow the holy spirit to speak and to lead and to do things that we might not expect.

It shows up in our understanding of a sacramental approach to living, in terms of: what does it mean to be baptized? How do we share a sense of communion? It's Christ's real presence in the midst that joins us. He's the bread and the wine that we share and holds us together, and it's the Spirit that baptizes us or initiates us into a new and loving way, and that's more powerful than water. More powerful than bread and wine.

And it just keeps showing up, over and over again, that for us, that presence in the midst makes us a little bit different.

A Prayer for Friends

I guess my hope and prayer for the Religious Society of Friends is that we can experience that reality of Christ coming to teach us and lead us again as—beyond our local meetings, but into our yearly meetings and across our yearly meeting borders and maybe, in my wildest prayers, for a community like F.U.M., is across all the continents and other ways that would divide us, that we'll experience that reality.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *What do you think George Fox meant when he said that "Christ has come to teach his people himself"? What does that phrase mean to you?*
2. *Colin Saxton describes the implications of Friends' conviction that Christ is present in our midst. Do you agree with his conclusions? What do you think it is about Quakers that makes us "a little bit different"?*

10. Let Your Heart Sing: Quakers and Music

TRANSCRIPT

*When friends by shame are undefiled,
How can I keep from singing?
How can I keep from singing?*

Let Your Heart Sing

I'm Laura Dungan. Wichita, Kansas, a member of University Friends Meeting/Church, depending on who you're talking to and where you're at.

I'm Aaron Fowler. Wichita, Kansas, Heartland Friends Meeting in Wichita.

Spirit as Vibration

Aaron Fowler: When I do a science of sound project with elementary age kids and we have a big bass speaker and we talk about 2 Hz, we're playing 2 Hz and we say, "Can you hear it?" They all lean forward and say, "We can't hear it!" but they're watching the bass speaker and this bass speaker is vibrating and its moving and you can't hear the sound, but you know that there's an energy and something moving.

You can't identify it, you can't touch it and feel but its there, you just know. It's kind of like an earthquake. You don't hear it but you can feel it and you know that there's something very powerful that's present. That happens in worship. Worship in silence where someone stands up and shares a message out of the silence, it's like, "whoa, OK. Something's rocking here."

Friends and Music

Laura Dungan: We were raised in the United Methodist Church and I was raised in a very musical family. Aaron had a lot of music coming from his grandmother and both of his parents sang in the church choir. So anyway, we grew up with that kind of environment, and then we came to Quakers in college. When I read George Fox's Journal, it was all about the power of the Spirit and I had already experienced the power of the Spirit through music.

I never. . . in Kansas. . . I don't know if it's the brand of Quakers down there that tend to be a little more evangelical, but you know, you've got your hymns and you've got your music going on. I never had any bar about that at all. It wasn't until I came hanging out with Eastern Quakers that I was like "Ohhh" I realized that there's something that people are working on here, with music and being a Quaker. For me, it wasn't ever divided.

Aaron Fowler: I think that music division across the different Quaker roots, Quaker branches. . . from the Evangelical side, music always was there. And when we go to the gathering and when we go to unprogrammed Meetings, there is such a deep hungering to sing together. . . and I think it goes back to that whole, "What's happening with the vibrations? What's moving that we don't know?" It rises up within us.

And so, hey! Let your heart sing! Let your heart sing. It's OK. You won't get in trouble. I don't think anybody will kick you out of Meeting now. Maybe.

*Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing.
It sounds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Is there music in your Meeting's worship service? Do you find singing with others to be spiritually enlivening?*
- 2. Aaron describes a bass sound so low that the human ear can't perceive it, yet it is still perceptibly present. He relates this to the experience of feeling the Spirit as a Friend is giving ministry. Does this resonate for you? What are the similarities (and differences) between those two things?*

II. A Quaker Call to Action on Israel-Palestine

TRANSCRIPT

Jennifer Bing: From my history of what I knew growing up as a Quaker is that we took risks. Mary Dyer went back to the Boston Common. John Woolman went and talked to people about where they purchased their clothing. There were Quakers that helped with the Underground Railroad. Et cetera, et cetera. People who would even take personal risk to stand up for the truth as they saw it.

“Vision for Equality” A Quaker Call to Action on Israel-Palestine

Brant Rosen: I visited Israel many, many times in my life, going back to when I was a kid and I would go on the hermetically-sealed trip. In other words, I would go to the Jewish parts of Israel, and it wasn't until later, as an adult, that I literally crossed the line and spent time in the West Bank. I realized that we really have in this tiny little land two radically different universes. When you're in Tel Aviv, you can be sipping cappuccino by the beach in a cafe and literally just a few kilometers to your south is the Gaza Strip, which is one of the most hellish places to live on Earth.

On the Ground in Palestine

Ayah Bashir: People are only concerned about living their days. About the basic things of life. For example, getting electricity, which they get only six hours a day. Getting water, clean water. Getting jobs. You have skyrocketing rates of unemployment, around 60% or even more, people are unemployed. Especially youth. So youth don't see that there is a future, even, in Gaza.

The Impact of Occupation

Tamara Tamimi: If they stop my father's car in Ramallah and he shows them his I.D. and its color is blue, and my sister is in the car with him and she shows them her green I.D., West Bank I.D., it means that he has to pay a little bit more than fifteen hundred dollars and his car is taken away from him for 3 months. It's illegal that he drives his daughter around in his car.

Ayah Bashir: When I went to Erez checkpoint in order to cross to present-day Israel, I was expecting that I will see Israeli soldiers face-to-face, because I have never been in all my life in direct contact with an Israeli soldier, but to my astonishment, when I arrived there, it was like watching a science fiction movie because everything there was with signs, with colored lights. And then, I saw an Israeli soldier who was sitting behind her desk behind a glass window. She asked me to take off all my clothes. I was completely surprised, I said, “Why?” And she said just like this, “Take off all your clothes and put them in the machine.”

So I did, but then after I get out, I kept crying because I felt that, again, I have been humiliated. It's not enough for them to impose the siege. It wasn't enough for them to launch 3 massive attacks. Still they keep humiliating us.

“We Don't Have the Luxury of Despair”

Jennifer Bing: My first involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was on an Earlham study abroad program in 1982, and since then I've been committed to this issue. Oftentimes people ask me, “How can you do this work for so long?” I think, “Well, how can I not work on it?” How can I, with the knowledge that I have, with the experiences that I've had over all these many decades, how can I not work on it? Why should I have the luxury of stopping when all these people—these young people, these old people, who live under such hardship—they're not giving up. I don't feel I have the luxury of despair.

Finding the Courage of Our Convictions

Brant Rosen: As American people of faith, we need to speak our conscience, and we need to find the courage of our convictions. And if we believe in values such as equality for all, regardless of our race or religion or ethnic background, then in this land that is so sacred to so many people—not only Jews: Christians and Muslims—we need to find the courage of our convictions to call for justice. My conscience tells me, and my religious faith tells me, that when you see oppression going on, you call out the oppressor and you stand with the oppressed.

Resisting Nonviolently

Tamara Tamimi: Because we were working on the right to freedom of movement, we said OK, we want to determine the companies that are complicit in violating our right to freedom of movement. We decided to choose HP, because HP is complicit in settlement activities, they provide surveillance equipment and technology for the separation wall, they provide technology to the Israeli prisons.

Ayah Bashir: Not because I hate Israel as Israel, but because I hate the oppressive system of Israel, and not because I want to destroy the Israelis or the Jews, but because I want this apartheid system of discriminatory policies to be ended.

Exactly Where We Need to Be

Ayah Bashir: So I'm asking American citizens to come in solidarity with our struggle, with the Palestinians, and to say "no more" to what Israel is doing.

Jennifer Bing: We look at all the social movements that Quakers have been active in, and we're proud that we were on the right side of history, and I want the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to be in that narrative. I want us to feel that it is the continuum. We're calling for nonviolent means to end the Israeli occupation. We have a vision of Israelis and Palestinians living together in equality. We want historical injustices to be addressed. I want that to be seen not as an aberration, but a continuum of this history, and for Quakers to feel that that's exactly where we need to be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Jennifer Bing says, "We look at all the social movements that Quakers have been active in, and we're proud that we were on the right side of history. I want the Palestinian-Israeli to be a part of that continuum." What do you think that would look like?*
2. *As a person of faith, how do you feel called to act when you witness oppression?*

12. A Life Beyond Fear and Guilt

TRANSCRIPT

So the reason that I'm a Quaker is I believe that there is a possibility of a life beyond fear and guilt. I believe that there is a potential in which we foster our own internal capacity for wisdom and compassion in this way that shifts our center, who's in the driver's seat of our lives—what's coming up and how it's processed—in this way that starts to manifest in really creative and courageous lives.

A Life Beyond Fear and Guilt

There was a time in my life when I really wanted to strike fear from my heart and I realized that what I was doing was trying to ignore and sublimate these really powerful emotions and feelings and it bubbles up, it bubbles up, and I would try to force it down. Sort of like a beach ball in the swimming pool, it pops up here, it pops up there.

“Perfect Love Casts Out Fear”

As I realized through worship that I could invite my fear and I could invite my guilt into the conversation without it controlling me—without it determining how I behave and how I act—it started to diminish. And as those passions diminish, what I think you start to find is this capacity for compassion or empathy or co-suffering that's latent down there.

And so in Meeting for Worship, as you have this ember, you start to blow on it and it becomes brighter and brighter. I think this is why John says that perfect love casts out fear. It's not that the opposite of love is hate, right? It's that the opposite of love is fear.

The Discipline of Worship

Meeting for Worship really only makes sense in a context where someone has some discipline throughout the week where they are allowing those fears and those shoulds and those needs and those pangs of guilt and the criticisms of their internal parents or internal boss or whatnot, and all that stuff is able to come up and just be held in the light in such a way that it loses its authority.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How do you deal with it when difficult emotions arise in Meeting for Worship?*
2. *Ross says, “Meeting for Worship really only makes sense in a context where someone has some discipline throughout the week where. . . all that stuff is able to come up and just be held in the light in such a way that it loses its authority.” Do you agree? What is your discipline?*

13. How Quaker Cemeteries Are Different

TRANSCRIPT

Since the beginning of the Quaker movement, one of the ways that Friends have distinguished themselves is in their practices connected with death and burial, and Quaker burying grounds, Quaker cemeteries—although cemetery is a word that Friends probably didn't use until at least the 19th century—are unusual. They are an illustration of how Friends tried to distinguish themselves from the rest of the world.

Equality, Even in Death: Why Quaker Cemeteries are Different

Friends believed that, as it was inappropriate to try to elevate some people above others in life, it was equally inappropriate to do that in death. Thus, Friends banned tombstones from their burying grounds because they thought that all that tombstones did was to distinguish some people from others.

Equality, Even in Death

When Quakers attended church in their parishes in 17th century England, in those churches they would've been surrounded by memorials. In some cases grandiose tombs, that even in death were intended to communicate that the upper classes—the people who had sat in the front-most pews by life—still exercised dominion, even in death, by the way that they had buried themselves.

Friends felt it appropriate, required of them, that even in death that they bear testimony against such practices that served to puff up human vanity.

Early Quaker Burial Grounds

So in a Quaker burying ground in the 17th and 18th centuries, most likely when you approached it you would have seen a simple, unbroken spans of Earth. Usually consisting entirely of unmarked graves. There were always some Friends who found that unacceptable. They certainly didn't want grandiose monuments that spoke to how some families were superior to others, but they could see nothing wrong with a simple stone that helped them remember where a loved one was buried.

Modern Quaker Cemeteries

By the middle of the 19th century, Friends finally decided that under certain circumstances, marking graves could be appropriate, and so Friends moved towards a new testimony on tombstones. Tombstones would be allowed, but they had to be simple. The name of the deceased, the date of death and the age, or maybe the date of birth. No ornamentation, no epitaphs, no decoration of any kind, and usually strict limits on height and width.

If you go, for example, to London Grove Meeting, Chester county, Pennsylvania, a Meeting that goes back to the 18th century, and look at the burying ground, there's maybe one marker before 1850. But if you go to, say, Gwynedd or Chichester or Old Caln, you'll find the burying ground full of simple, rough stones, going back into the 18th century.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Early Quakers believed that ornate gravestones communicated the dominion of the upper classes, even in death. Do you think this still applies today?*
2. *What would you like to have on your tombstone?*

14. How Modern Quakers Challenge Traditional Gender Roles

TRANSCRIPT

If someone comes into a Quaker Meeting, and they see all of these people acting out of their usual roles—you see all these women that are really out there and leading and, I don't know, being amazing and powerful and exciting, that's what I think, or we see these men that are being so tender and listening really deeply and well to the people around them and making space for females to voice without being overtaken—someone might think, "Wow, how did these people get like this?"

How Quakers Challenge Traditional Gender Roles

In my assessment, we definitely have such a strong history of male and female empowerment and that we want it to be equal. That goes back to the very first days of Quakerism, and I think that whether we're conscious of it or not, there's a way that we want to carry that forward. Women in our society: not treated equally, not listened to as much, not given as much respect. And so in Quaker meetings and Quaker communities, we really want to make that more possible than what you might see elsewhere.

Growing Into Who We Could Be

I think another thing is—consciously or not—it's a critique of how oppressive our gender dynamics are today, and that's something I see in the queer community too. It's a lot of people saying, "Woah, hold up. This whole thing that we have going on in society is really violent." Whether it's physically violent, but it's emotionally violent. It's violent towards us growing into who we can be, for men and women . . . that men have to be huge and they have to be strong all the time and they have to be loud and they have to be the leaders and they have to have all the responsibility. That is violence against men.

Men don't have to be all that way. If it's how they are and how they are feeling led to be and how their natural gifts are coming out, great! I love for men to be that way. But they don't have to be, and forcing them into that box is just as oppressive as forcing women into the box of: you have to be accommodating, you have to be listening, you have to be supportive. You have to take the back seat if the man has a really good idea he's excited about, you have to just follow, whether you like it or not. That's also oppressive and violent towards women. So there's this way that we're exploring. What is taking away that violence against men, and taking away this violence against women, what would that look like?

Exploring Alternative Gender Roles

And so one of the ways that I think Quakers are exploring that is: if I'm a man, what if I really learn how to take a step back and let others lead? Let women lead? What if I really learn how to listen attentively and absorb and even check in to make sure that I really got it and that I really listened? So there's this exploration of sort of gentle manhood and also listening manhood that maybe I don't see other places, and also women leading, women being listened to, being held up.

Seeking Balance

And it's not always, you know, it's a bumpy road. Sometimes we have women that are totally unbound and they're just going off and you're like, "Ok, well, some balance there would probably be good." and sometimes we have these men that actually feel like they can't be strong and big because they maybe would be a bad liberal Quaker, which I disagree with but I really get why it would pan out that they would feel that way.

It's such a funny dynamic in our communities, that we have this loudness and this quietness. We have this forward, leading, passion, visionary, and we have this gentle, listening, open, tender thing. We have both.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Historically, Quakers challenged traditional gender roles by accepting women as ministers. How does that manifest today?*
2. *Maggie says that the strict gender roles enforced on us is violent towards both men and women, and inhibits us from "growing into what we could be." What do you think she means by this? Do you agree?*

15. Why I Blockaded 40,000 Tons of Coal With a Lobster Boat

TRANSCRIPT

Ken Ward: Hi, this is Ken Ward. I'm on board the boat, the Henry David T., off the pier at Brayton Point, and I wanted to let you know that we're conducting a nonviolent, completely peaceful protest against the use of coal, and we'll be completely cooperative.

On May 15th, 2013, I and my friend Ken motored our 32-foot white lobster boat, named the Henry David T., into Brayton Point, which is the largest single source of climate changing carbon emissions in all of New England.

We've got the red, white, and blue flying up there, and Brayton Point station in back of us with a giant pile of coal.

. . . and we dropped anchor—a rather large anchor—in a place that would prevent the incoming shipment of West Virginia coal from being docked and unloaded.

Captain of the Energy Enterprise: Ok, this is the captain of the vessel. You're impeding the safe passage of my vessel. I've contacted the United States Coast Guard and I'll let you deal with them.

Jay O'Hara: Roger, Captain. Thank you.

Captain of the Energy Enterprise: And if we are attacked, we will defend ourselves.

Jay O'Hara: Uh, Roger Captain. This is Jay of the Henry David T. Just to let you know, this is a peaceful and nonviolent protest, and we're here to witness that coal should not be being burned here in Massachusetts and New England. This is Henry David T. standing by, 16.

For six hours, the Energy Enterprise was prevented from unloading its shipment of 40,000 tons of Appalachian coal.

There was this clarity that we need to start being really bold in what we do, and we need to start making visible the tragedy that we're perpetuating on ourselves and be bold in disclosing our role in that when we flip on the lightswitch.

For Jay, the protest was an act of faith.

My journey into faithfulness started through activism. In order to be effective you have to be not striving for effectiveness, because the measures that we have for effectiveness rely on the world's measurement of what is effective. The world doesn't actually believe we can do what needs to happen, but our hearts know what's possible. I have faith that God has some plans, or some ability, or that the Great Big Spirit Mama of the Universe can move us in the right direction if we pay attention and if we listen.

The whole story of going to block this coal ship is a cascade of doors opening that we had no control over, at almost every turn being guided: "Oh no, this is the way. This is the way."

Ken and Jay were charged with conspiracy, disturbing the peace, failure to avoid collision, and negligent operation of a motor vessel.

They faced the potential of several years in prison.

I am in a place where I can't pretend to know what should happen or what the most effective outcome would be. I don't know. And in my giving over my life, I'm trusting and hoping that I'll be used for the highest good, but under no illusion that I know what that is. But I know that if I stay low and stay open and keep my focus on my faithfulness in every moment that's opened to me, I'm gonna end up in the right place.

In September of 2014, the Bristol County D.A. decided to drop the conspiracy charges and reduce the other charges to civil infractions.

Climate change is one of the gravest crises our planet has ever faced. <Amen!> In my humble opinion, the political leadership in this area has been extremely lacking. I am also extremely pleased that we were able to reach an agreement that symbolizes our commitment at the Bristol County District Attorney's Office to take a leadership office on this issue. <Amen!> <Cheering>

Ken and Jay's blockade sparked a summer of action at the Brayton Point Power Plant, including the arrest of 44 people at the gates of the plant in July 2013.

Last fall, the owners announced the closure of Brayton Point in 2017.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *"The world doesn't actually believe we can do what needs to happen, but our hearts know what's possible," says Jay O'Hara. Are there other examples of needed advances that seem beyond the world's belief?*
2. *Sometimes when Quakers listen to our guide, we are instructed to do things we never would have imagined. Jay says, "in my giving over my life, I'm trusting and hoping that I'll be used for the highest good, but under no illusion that I know what that is." What does it look like for us to give over our lives this way?*

16. How Quakers Can Help End Mass Incarceration

TRANSCRIPT

Laura Magnani: The system we have now is based on violence. That is at the core. We give ourselves permission to be as violent to certain human beings as possible, up to and including death.

How Quakers Can Help to End Mass Incarceration

Lewis Webb: For me, mass incarceration is really over-incarceration. A system that has criminalized too many activities, and focused on a particular population to enforce that criminalization

Laura Magnani: So when I first started working on it in California at its low point—which was when Reagan was Governor of California—we were down to about 17,000 prisoners in the state prison. Now we have . . . we went as high as 170,000.

Targeting People of Color

Laura Magnani: It's pretty shocking to walk inside any jail or prison in the United States and see the demographics because it's very disproportionately people of color compared to the general population.

Farajii Muhammed: It's really a system that's designed to keep us in a state where we have no power. A system that's really designed to keep the poor, keep those who are not accessible to resources, the disadvantaged, the marginalized, the disenfranchised . . . and I think for Black people it goes as far back as the institution of slavery itself. It really puts the people in a place where they can't find themselves any real . . . there's no light at the end of the tunnel. They can't find themselves free.

The Impact of Incarceration

Lewis Webb: About a week ago, I was talking to a gentleman who came home after 44 years of incarceration, and I asked him, "What are you experiencing?" and I thought he would say, "Well, I can't get a job. I can't do this. . ." But he said, "I don't know how to cross the street." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "When I left, cars were not moving this fast."

The realities of spending 40-plus years, for many men and women, away from the world. . . I just don't know what they're going to do. And it's not an isolated case. We are incarcerating people, not just at high numbers, but for unbelievable periods of time.

Laura Magnani: I think there's a tendency often for white Quakers—of which I am one—to think it doesn't affect us in the same way as it might if we were people of color primarily, and if our own loved ones were inside. But because of the impact that it has on the economy, because of the way that its devastating our cities, because of the fact that the money spent on prisons, like the money spent on military, is draining funds from everything else we need to make us healthy. It is impacting all of us.

Impact on Families

Laura Magnani: I think another way that it's had a tremendous impact is on the families left behind. So people forget about the fact that when we incarcerate parents, children are also in effect doing time.

Lewis Webb: Mass incarceration has created single-parent homes and will continue to create them. I'm afraid for the women in my community. The men are being taken away. And therefore, our numbers as a people are going to go down. Some people call it genocide, I'm afraid that I'm not quite there yet, but if we don't fix it, this may prove to be a genocidal result.

And so the impact is far reaching and frightening.

A New Paradigm

Laura Magnani: One of the definitions of sin is separation from God, and when we allow ourselves to separate ourselves from each other, we're creating divides. And we're creating greater broken-ness. That's what separation is, it's broken-ness. And so what we have to be talking about is wholeness. How can we bring people back in? What would it take to restore or to create for the first time a whole and healthy and inclusive society?

We need a new paradigm. That's what we need. And it needs to be a transformative justice paradigm that's based on wholeness and healing and not on punishment and revenge.

An Issue of Faith

Lewis Webb: It's really about, if you truly believe that God can be seen in all of us, then it's incumbent upon us to make life as whole for all of us as possible, and prisons don't do that. Criminalizing people, marginalizing people just doesn't do that. It's just not Quakers, all people of faith, all people of goodwill in my opinion have that responsibility. . . to mitigate if not eradicate those injustices.

Farajii Muhammed: It's a huge imbalance in the criminal justice system. It targets Blacks, it targets poor. It targets Latinos. It's a huge imbalance there. So our responsibility—our call to action with this whole system—is to bring true justice and real balance back into a system.

Time to Act

Lewis Webb: We as people of goodwill have allowed so much of this injustice to be done in our name that it's our responsibility to reverse it. We have entombed justice behind "get tough on crime" policies. Punish the sinner, however you want to phrase it, and if we don't remove that stone quickly, justice will die in that tomb.

It's going to take a hammer and a chisel. We're not going to be able to just roll the stone away this time. We're going to have to chisel at it piece by piece, and I'm urging every member of any community of faith to pick up his hammer and his chisel. If it's helping people re-enter from prison, then chisel there. If it's really about organizing conferences, do your chiseling there. For Quakers and all of us who care, get to work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Laura Magnani says, "One of the definitions of sin is separation from God, and when we allow ourselves to separate ourselves from each other, we're creating divides. And we're creating greater brokenness." What do you think about that definition of sin? How does this relate to our criminal justice system?*
2. *Historically, Quakers have been very active in prison reform, from our own imprisonment in 17th-century dungeons to the advent of the "Penitentiary." How are Friends called to engage with our prison system today?*

17. Why I Worship With Other Kinds of Quakers

TRANSCRIPT

The thing that has been the largest blessing for me to recognize is that the Quakerism that I'm doing in my Monthly Meeting: it's good. It's mine. But it's not everything that Quakerism offers.

Why I Worship With Other Kinds of Quakers

My name is Benigno Sanchez-Eppler and I live in Amherst, Massachusetts. I'm a member of Northampton Friends Meeting and I've been working for the Friends World Committee for about two decades now. Lately, they have called me to serve as their clerk.

Looking to Early Friends

You start reading Early Friends, and you can see how my Monthly Meeting is an heir of what the Early Friends started, but you can also see that the Early Friends would've been foreign and uncomfortable in our Monthly Meeting, and that people from my Monthly Meeting would have been foreign and uncomfortable in the gatherings of Early Friends.

That's true for everybody. It's true for the Evangelical Friends. It's true in Friends United Meeting. It's true even for the Conservative Friends, who look more like the Early Friends. And so when I go out of my Monthly Meeting and I worship in another church, in another Friends Church, when I visit them what I get in fact are those parts of Quakerism that – if you look at the Early Friends – were definitely parts of Quakerism that I'm not so much doing anymore.

Friends' Diversity As An Opportunity To Practice Peacemaking

We have, inside of the Quaker spectrum, all of the tendencies and all of the articulations of belief, all of the affect and animosities that are fueling the culture wars everywhere.

I feel that whenever I'm in worship with someone who's so different from me that I could very easily find him or her on the trench in front of me in the culture war, and yet we don't engage in the violence of denying each other, of demonizing each other. When we engage in worship and in shared work and we don't let ourselves become tools of the separating spirit, if Quakerism does that right, again we will have provided an example of peacemaking.

When We Struggle, the Spirit Is There

The miracle happens when we're not like minded. When we have substantial differences. When we have animosities even. When we have a real intent that this is what needs to happen, the Spirit comes, is felt, and love is felt. And then, a desire comes over us of surrendering those things that are more ours than the Spirit's. I have felt unity arrive at the Monthly Meeting like a balm, like soaking. Particularly in those moments when we have been struggling with each other.

Living With the Love of God Spilling Out From Us

When you hold all the differences, you don't hide, them, you know that they're there. There's something about the possibility that the differences are acknowledged, and that then, because we are living with the love of God in us and with the love of God spilling out from us, that we can do what needs to be done to arrive at unity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Have you ever gone to a Quaker Meeting that was different in theology or worship style from your own? What was the experience like?*
2. *Benigno talks about living with the love of God spilling out through us, and that transforming our relationship with those on the other side of the culture wars from us. Have you experienced this state of mind when talking with someone who you wouldn't normally relate to? How do we get there?*

18. How to Clerk a Quaker Business Meeting

TRANSCRIPT

Early on, and perhaps from the very beginning, Quakers have had a concern to live their lives in alignment with the Spirit, I think because lives lived in that alignment are more meaningful, more exciting, more dynamic, more joyful than any other way we could choose to live our lives.

And it's not because the Bible says so, it's not because our Quaker forbears say so, it's because that's the experience. Our experience is that living our lives in as close to alignment with the Spirit as possible is what gives life meaning and energy and joy. And what's not to like about that?

The Quaker Business Meeting

A Quaker business meeting has two distinguishing characteristics that are foremost in my mind. One is that it's a non-voting process, and the second distinguishing characteristic is that it's a spiritual process. It's both non-voting and spiritual.

The spiritual part of it is that a group which meets to do the business of the community consciously invites spiritual awareness and spiritual guidance in the doing of its work. Another is to avoid the divisiveness of a majority-rule process. The majority-rule process which we experience in our wider culture produces winners and losers, and it's divisive.

Quakers thrive in community. Community is one of the ways that Quakers have the experience of God, and so Quakers are very careful about community and not creating disharmony or divisiveness in the community, and Quakers are willing to take a long time to preserve the unity of community, because community is so important to the experience of worship.

"Clerking" a Quaker Business Process

A clerk is the person who presides; the presiding clerk is the person who presides at that Meeting. Probably the best synonym for clerk is facilitator, "spiritual facilitator," facilitating the work of the Meeting with consciousness about Spirit, presence of Spirit, in the mix.

One of my first clerking assignments was as clerk of my Monthly Meeting, and when I finished six years of being clerk, there was a moment to invite appreciation for my service, and one of the most meaningful things that's ever been said to me was somebody in that Meeting for appreciation said, "Arthur, thank you for cooperating with your gifts." "Thank you for cooperating with your gifts."

And it began to dawn on me that there was some energy that I had that corresponded to the idea of gift, and that when I acted in that mode, I came alive. I felt energy and buoyancy and spirit.

I will say to clerks, "Don't be a clerk – don't say yes to being a clerk – unless you can understand or expect that you're going to get something out of it. Don't be a clerk as a cross to bear. Do not be a clerk as a cross to bear. Don't be a clerk unless you understand that being clerk, there's an exchange of energy between you and the Meeting, and the energy goes from you to the Meeting, and you need to expect energy from the Meeting to you.

A Well-Clerked Business Meeting

A well-clerked business Meeting is a Meeting in which we are all brought together into some new place, and as a clerk, if I can facilitate the possibility that we will all be brought together into some new place that lifts us all up or points us all in a single direction, or deals with the issues of the community, there is joy for me there. There is joy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Have you experienced a well-clerked business Meeting? What did the clerk do that brought the Meeting together into a “new place”?*
- 2. What is valuable to you about the way that Quakers run our business meetings?*
- 3. Have you ever clerked a business meeting? What was the experience like for you? What were the challenges and the joys?*

19. How to Teach Civics in a Quaker School

TRANSCRIPT

When students are given a chance to apply their knowledge, they really learn the lesson. If you say, “Open up to page 200; this is the way that checks and balances work,” you might as well not even say that, because oftentimes the kids are daydreaming. They don’t have context for how that impacts their lives. So to teach civics with an actual application I think is the only way to really teach it.

How to Teach Civics in a Quaker School

My name is Randall Williams, I am a teacher at Carolina Friends School and today we’re filming here on my farm, Fireside Farm in Efland.

Teaching “Quaker Advocacy”

For the last 3 years, I’ve taught a class called “Quaker Advocacy.” In that class, we learn about Quakerism and then also public policy and particularly advocacy and lobbying skills. The focal point of that class is work with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, which is a Quaker lobby in the public interest. The Friends Committee on National Legislation sets up a Spring Lobby Weekend where they invite students from around the country and trains those participants in the best ways to lobby: how to be civil, how to frame the conversation, how to use personal narratives, and then will support them as they go and they meet with their senators and their representatives.

Designing a Growth Experience

Teaching is about design. You’re designing these experiences that are likely to be transformative. You cannot be for certain that an experience is going to be transformative. That happens on the students’ own terms, but you can at least set the right circumstances. So what that means is when you introduce them to people who are different, make that engagement profound and meaningful with authentic conversations. Don’t just tell them to go to the protest rally, tell them to go to the offices of somebody that they disagree with and have a meaningful conversation with them.

For our purposes, the class is a real primer in the legislative process. It is the embodiment of what’s called “action civics”: learning about the way our government functions by participating in it.

Teaching By Example

Spring Lobby Weekend is important to my students because it shows them consistency between the ethical belief and the application, the action. They need adults showing them, “I care about climate change. I’m taking this weekend to go lobby my legislator. I believe in democracy. I believe in representative democracy so I’m participating in it.”

In a Quaker school, a critical number of adults need to model for the students what that engagement looks like on the adult end. Spring Lobby Weekend is a really easy way for schools to show students ethical consistency.

Engaging With Conflict As a Learning Opportunity

I think a lot of what students learn at a Quaker school is the peaceful resolution of conflict. We see conflict as inevitable, as creative, as transformational, and an invitation to pause, to reflect upon where these differences have come from.

Conflict, for us, ideally, is an invitation to engage in dialogue. “What do you see from your perspective of this reality? This is what I see from my perspective. What have we got here? Ok, let’s explore this together.”

My Quaker Advocacy class exists within the context of North Carolina politics, which, over my students’ lifetime, has been contentious and nasty. It has taken a lot for me and them to unprogram ourselves from the type of incivility and winner-takes-all mentality that characterizes politics. The Friends Committee on National Legislation has really helped us – has trained us – to engage in politics with integrity rather than one-upmanship.

The Quaker Way to Lobby

Lobbying, in addition to being about civics, is about a healthy way of dealing with conflict. It’s about recognizing that somebody has a different opinion from you and standing in such a way that says, “Here’s my truth. What’s your truth? Let’s navigate this together civilly.” So the lobbying is just practice for the kinds of conversations that these students are going to have in their workplaces, in their family lives, in their private relationships and with their friends.

There is a path of integrity. And that is what the Friends Committee on National Legislation teaches my students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How did you learn about civics and government? What value do you see in Randall’s approach to it?*
2. *Randall says that at many Friends Schools, conflict is seen as inevitable, creative, transformational, and an invitation to pause and reflect. Is this what you were taught about conflict? What happens in our community when we see conflict this way?*

20. Quakers and the Still, Small Voice

TRANSCRIPT

Noah Merrill: What I've found again and again is that there are moments where I am able to make enough space to listen to that still, small voice—to that inward voice of Christ that leads me into a different way of living. A different way of loving in the world.

Quakers and the Still, Small Voice

Brian Drayton: The first Friends—especially George Fox—the core of their message is that “Christ has come to teach his people himself.” It's not a theological thing: Friends experienced unmediated discipleship. Just like Peter followed Jesus and heard Jesus' voice, got the teachings direct, had to encounter Jesus' personality for good and for ill—that's what Friends were experiencing. That was the inward teacher.

Fascinatingly, just like the Holy Spirit spoke through the apostles at the Pentecost in such a way that everybody heard the Spirit speaking in their own language, so, too, the Christ Spirit in all ages has been speaking in ways that people could understand in their situation and in their times.

The Still, Small Voice

Deborah Shaw: So the still, small voice is about us understanding that when we still ourselves and quiet ourselves and, I think part of it is making yourself not be the center of the story, like that I am not the center of the story. . . .

Deborah Suess: I think it's helpful to remember that for most of us, we don't see writing on the wall. Most of us don't hear a vocal leading. Most of us don't frequently have these, like, dynamic mystical experiences, although they happen.

Deborah Shaw: And so we have to be quiet. We have to lean forward and say, “Oh, yes. . . .”

What We Hear When We Listen

O: When I listen—when I really listen—I am listening to hear God speak. I am listening for God's voice. God's signal. What that means to me is the signal that moves me to aliveness.

Deborah Shaw: So the still, small voice might be consolation. It also might be reproof. It also might be inspiration or challenge or encouragement. I get a sense of a way forward and a comfortable-ness in my body-mind-spirit which is saying “yes, that's not just you”—although I have to be a part of that co-creating—but that's God speaking to me. The inward Christ, the inward teacher.

Brian Drayton: Now, that inward teacher we believe has been present in all ages and in all people, because the inward teacher is another way of talking about the inward light. And that's the Christ Spirit at work in all ages, if you follow John, which Friends like to do. . . . the gospel of John I mean.

The Challenge of Listening

Noah Merrill: It's been my experience that the most clear invitations to live in a way that is about love and wholeness come in a voice that is very easy to ignore, that it's very easy for me to let my ego, let my fears, my anxieties, the ways that I'm bound up govern the way I live my life.

O: It's almost as if the energy of the soul, in all of its power and its richness and its movement. . . . that which has the capacity to create universes, my belief is that we have a tendency to suppress it.

Deborah Suess: . . . and so often times I think it's important that we learn to quiet enough to discern the Spirit Christ's pattern of speaking to us.

O: Finding a way to really tap, locate, that energy and allowing it to come forth . . . it's a power. It's a power. And that power, in order to break through the ego structures and the racism and the classism and the homophobia-isms, and all those isms—in order for Spirit to come through that, there is this aliveness and power that pushes up and out and the body quakes. That's one way of accessing it.

Putting the Still, Small Voice at the Center of Our Lives

Jay O'Hara: Putting the still, small voice at the center looks like not doing anything until it's clear—until you're truly led.

Deborah Shaw: Even if it's telling me I must do something that I'm not happy about maybe engaging in, or even if that is a discomfort place, I still have the sense of comfort and calm. There's a sense of a deeper peace that accompanies that, those commands or those encouragements.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *How do you hear the voice of God?*
2. *Deborah Suess says, "Most of us don't frequently have these like, dynamic mystical experiences, although they happen." What does she mean? Have you had something that you would call a "dynamic, mystical" experience?*

21. What If Wall Street Were Honest?

TRANSCRIPT

I think the financial industry is not unique in this regard, but is particularly guilty of trying to obfuscate things. Wall Street is just known for putting everything in these complicated acronyms and making everything more complicated than perhaps it needs to be.

What If Wall Street Were Honest?

Mark Hulbert's my name, I live in Hillsborough, N.C. The meeting that my family and I attend is the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting in Chapel Hill, though I'm officially a member of the Manhattan, Kansas Meeting where I grew up.

My day job is the editor of a newsletter called the Hulbert Financial Digest, and it's a service that keeps track of the performance of investment advisors, so it's like a consumer's report of the industry. It was sold to MarketWatch—CBS MarketWatch at the time—which is now a part of Dow Jones a number of years ago, so I am now also a senior columnist for their website.

Getting Into Finance

So as I got out of graduate school I took a number of writing and research projects, and one of those was to write an article about some of these investment advisors who were speaking at a conference, all of whom got up and said how great they were and how much money you would have made if you'd only been smart enough to follow them.

And you knew that they could not all be telling the truth because they were contradicting each other, but you couldn't also, a priori, tell which one of them was lying or if all of them were lying, and this was so offensive to my philosophical sensibilities and my religious sensibilities.

Quaker Influence

Yeah, I grew up a Quaker. I was born into it. My dad helped start the meeting in 1955. He was a conscientious objector in World War II and that's when he became exposed to Quakerism and became a Quaker, so I was able to grow up in that faith, and a lot of it came through as osmosis, rather than by conviction, but it's one of those things that as you grow older, you discover, "Oh, that's why I believe what I believe!"

The Steam That Turns the Wheel

Most advisors, in fact the vast majority of them, do less well than they would if they just flipped a coin. Investment advice is so abstract, and so there's not anything you can put your hands on. What other industry would be able to survive if 90 percent of them weren't doing as well as you could by flipping a coin? It's an incredible industry.

I'm trying to remember the famous Quaker who once told me, but it's sort of the principle that the steam that blows the whistle is not the steam that turns the wheel. So much of the financial industry, their expenses are marketing. They are out there telling the world how great they are, and since most of the time they're not that great, in addition to lying, it's also that steam that's blowing the whistle rather than actually doing their job.

The Simplicity of the Truth

Early on, there were threats of lawsuit and other kinds of threats that, you know, Who in the world was I to say these things about their track record? But it turns out that the truth is rather simple.

Customers, not just in the financial industry are far more attracted to truth telling, so if you were to say, “You know what, I really made a mistake and I haven’t done all that well, but I’ll do my best and I’ll do it honestly and I’ll involve you in the decision-making and we’ll be partners in trying to make it more possible that you can retire comfortably or whatever is your goal,” people are attracted to that.

In the end, things may not be all that complicated. There’s a lot of simplicity here, and it starts with the simplicity of the truth. And just that simple notion is so powerful, it cuts through a heck of a lot.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Mark refers to the quote, “The steam that blows the whistle is not the steam that turns the wheel,” when referring to marketing and honesty when dealing with customers. What does this quote mean to you? What other contexts might it relate to?*
2. *Mark draws on the Quaker testimony of integrity when he says that, “customers are far more attracted to truth telling”. In fact, this is one of the reason that Quakers have historically been very successful in business. Is this your experience? How does it apply to your professional experience?*

22. The top 7 Most Quaker Bible Verses

TRANSCRIPT

If we were to say, "What's a scriptural foundation of Quakerism?"; there are verses we would point to and say, for instance, "This is where we got our name. This is where we have our understanding of God. This is where the idea of unity comes from." (Although it's mentioned in many places.)

Top 7 Most Quaker Bible Verses

These verses are verses that are both important to me and are verses that I hear other Friends use, either directly by quoting them or indirectly by living out what they describe. Other people may have a different list; these are mine.

#7 Ephesians 4:1

So the first verse is Ephesians 4:1.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

The reason I had thought of that one is because we like the phrase, "Walk worthy of your calling."

#6 Isaiah 6:8

A lot of times when I'm in meetings with people traveling in the ministry or talking about ministry among Friends, Isaiah 6:8 comes up a lot, because it has to do with being willing to serve.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

#5 Matthew 5:33

The testimony of not swearing oaths dates back to the early Friends, and it is really tied to the testimony of integrity: that we should be telling the truth all the time.

But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair black or white. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'.

An oath is sort of saying, "You know, I lie sometimes, but this time I'm really telling the truth." And if you're always telling the truth, you shouldn't have to swear an oath.

#4 John 15:12

The Religious Society of Friends took its name from John 15.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

The reason I like this one is it's an encapsulation of not just our origin, but the idea of loving one another is central to us, just as the understanding of "God is Love" is central.

#3 John 1:9

This was one of the ones that George Fox used so many times you can't really count. You'd have a very long list if you listed all the references.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

A lot of times when people say there's "That of God" in others, it's speaking to the idea that, because everyone has that of God, you should treat them a certain way. I think that's a very worthy way to look at it, but the other way that it would've meant in George Fox's time was that we all have access to God and the Spirit that teaches us is available to everyone, and so it's also helpful to focus on that of God in ourselves and listen to that.

#2 Matthew 22:37

Of course in Jesus' ministry, people were always asking questions to try to trip him up, and in this particular case, one of the people he was debating with asked him, "What is the greatest commandment?" and he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

So again, it goes back to love. You love God, you love your neighbor. Everything else derives from those relationships.

#1 Galatians 5:22

So this verse is two verses. It's Galatians 5:22 and 23, and it often serves as a touchstone for people because it's about the fruit of the Spirit.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

For me, and I know for a lot of others, this is a great test of: "Are we in touch with the Spirit?" That when we are, these things are what should flow from us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Were you familiar with all of these passages? Which speak to you the most?*
- 2. What is your relationship with the Bible? Do you see Bible reading as necessary or helpful for a full spiritual life?*

23. How Can Pacifists Support Our Troops?

TRANSCRIPT

I'm trying to hold a space where somebody can open up and become and grow and struggle in the ways that they need to, right in that moment, believing deeply that they have strengths and resources in them, and also believing that all around them is this powerful holiness that is holding them and is lifting them up. It's the part of me that feels so Quaker as I'm doing this work, even in a strange context like the United States Marine Corps.

How Can Pacifists Supports Our Troops?

My name is Zachary Moon. I live in Denver, Colorado, and I work as a commissioned chaplain with the United States Navy.

One of the things that I've learned differently in this proximity to war, as a military chaplain, is that some of what needs healing after war – some of the expense that's been paid in war, beyond all of the monetary resources – is the toll that it's taken on thousands, really 2 million now, human bodies.

A New Paradigm For Relating To Veterans

I see us continuing to desire and seek after a programmatic solution to these costs, these traumas, these symptoms. The V.A. is this magnificent example of that, right? So, "Oh, we need this kind of therapy and all of these medications and we need these kinds of services," and it's all being done under this kind of hospital institution, and what's missing there (and where I see the kind of human struggle to come back from war that the V.A. will never be able to heal or even really address) is the cost that is really in the deeper recesses of our human-ness, that can really only be processed and only be lovingly engaged through relationship.

And when I think about, "What could a Quaker Meeting do?" Or, "What could another religious community do?" I think when we're at our best, we're doing relationship well. The kinds of relationships where we can listen deeply to one another. The kinds of relationships where we can listen across differences, so not just having relationships with people who can all agree about the same things, but maybe folks that maybe in lots of ways I disagree with — all of that can be best engaged through relationship. The kinds of relationship that allow for the space for lots of compassion and lots of patience and lots of mercy to just be shared back and forth.

Open Ears, Open Hearts

For Quakers, I think about how powerful our meetings for memorials are. You know, the kind of deep way that we are able to hear both grief and celebration in that space. Could we hold that kind of space, that kind of depth and intentionality for someone who is grieving all of what they've lost as a part of their military service? But also wants an opportunity to say, "You know, I learned some things that were important that I want to find a way to carry forward, because that's in me too." Could we find a way to celebrate that stuff too and not just – because we're pacifists – see it all as being evil and ugly and grotesque?

There's some real goodness that can happen in relationship with folks who are different than who I am or who our community is, but we've got to be willing to do a little bit of work – take a little stock on our beliefs and our values – and really be knowledgeable about who we are, not in a way to say, "Hey, we've got it all figured out. Let's take it to you and try to get you to fit into us." But more than that, to say, "Okay, here's the stuff that I'm dragging behind with me, and some of it's good and some of it's probably not that helpful, but I've got

to be responsible for it in this relationship. But if you are talking about your military service and I'm thinking about how there weren't weapons of mass destruction in Iraq like they said, I'm already failing you in this relationship, because I'm thinking about the wrong thing.

"What I need to be doing is turning both of my ears and my heart as open as it can be, I need to turn that to you and hear you."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Do you consider yourself a pacifist? How does that impact the way that you relate to someone who has served in the military?*
2. *Zac suggests that Quaker and other pacifist traditions might have a role to play in the healing that needs to take place after war. Do you agree? How?*

24. What Quakers Do in Silent Worship

TRANSCRIPT

Faith Kelley: I'm a little bit of an overachiever, so I usually come in and I'm like, "I'm going to worship now. I'm going to sit here and be the best worshipper ever, and this is going to be it." And I really have to let that go.

What Do Quakers Do in Meeting for Worship?

Peterson Toscano: I go to Quaker Meeting and I just let everything open up. I think of it as this wonderful scan disk of my hard drive, helping me clear out all of the gaps and be still and lay down things that are bothering me that really aren't that important, just getting me to a place of stability and clarity. It's been really important to me.

Preparing the Soil

Arthur Larrabee: Thinking about Meeting for Worship on Sunday, the first thing that comes to mind is to share that Meeting for Worship is a much more satisfactory experience if some spiritual preparation has been done in advance. The metaphor for me is "preparing the soil," so the soil is ready for the message or for the seed.

Kristina Keefe-Perry: It feels like it is very important to be part of a group of people who are creating a container of deepening worship that is already in process as other Friends arrive.

Centering

Tenaja Henson: I remember my first Meeting for Worship when I was older that I could remember was really difficult because I wanted to talk or play a game or go run around.

Arthur Larrabee: So often the energy of life is a topsy-turvy energy. It's energy going in many different directions with many different pressures, being pulled hither and yon, and it's centered in many many different places and not in one place.

Faith Kelley: I usually need the first 10, 15, 20, 30 – however long it takes – minutes to quiet myself.

Deborah Shaw: In the Meeting for Worship in the silence I am trying to center myself, which means to lay aside distractions of the world, and to listen carefully to the inward teacher, the inward guide, the inner Christ, that within me which is within me and also beyond me.

Faith Kelley: And for me that sort of involves that narrative voice that I sort of have going in the back of my head all the time, just sort of letting that go. It's not so much about quieting it but just releasing it. The more I sort of try to like, stuff it down, the louder it gets and so it's just sort of about letting it go. And that seems to make space for God to fill up.

Arthur Larrabee: There's a quote that means a lot to me from Thomas Kelly's essay, "The Light Within", which is found within his volume A Testament of Devotion:

"Deep within us all, there is an amazing sanctuary of the soul: a holy place, a divine center, a speaking voice to which we may continuously return."

That describes a centered place for me. This deep inner sanctuary of the soul. And I find meaning and value in trying to get there, making my way back home. Making my way back home.

Developing a Practice

Kristina Keefe-Perry: Thich Nhat Hanh, who is of course a Buddhist not a Quaker, talks about meditation as a process of sort of “tuning into the smile channel,” and somehow that description was very helpful for me. Let’s tune into the Spirit channel! Where in the body – in my body – do I perceive the Spirit moving among us?

Christie Duncan-Tessmer: I start by paying attention to my breath and my body, and slowing down my breath and feeling my body. I love the sense of settling into my body, and my body settling into space, and I feel my breath sort of going deeper and deeper.

Arthur Larrabee: Sometimes my mind will go to what has happened the preceding week, and I’ll ask the question, “How can I identify the movement of Spirit and what has happened for me in the week preceding this worship?”

Tenaja Henson: Something I do, I have these prayer beads that I wear all the time, and I’ll think of all the people in my life and I’ll hold them in the Light for a few minutes and let them know that I’m thinking about them and giving them positive energy.

Christie Duncan-Tessmer: Sometimes I focus on a particular phrase or word or image and try to hold that as long as I can and then keep coming back to it.

Tenaja Henson: I mean, I think for me, it let’s me know that even if somebody thinks they’re alone, you know, I can say, “No, you’re not. I’ve been thinking about you. And I don’t know if it’s impacted anyone else, I’ve never told anyone that so I guess, secrets out!

Waiting Expectantly

Kristina Keefe-Perry: Sandra Cronk, in her pamphlet on gospel order, has a sentence in the beginning of the pamphlet:

“Early Friends expected and experienced the in-breaking of the Spirit in their Meetings for Worship.”

And that sentence has been so important for me to hold onto like a life raft, continue to hold expectation. I think that’s why we call it “expectant waiting worship”, that positive expectation that we will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit among us, and we are just waiting for it to show up. It’s not an if, it’s a when.

Deborah Shaw: And then, when I get to that place, it’s a communal effort, it’s not just about me and my relationship with the divine – although that is an important part of it – but it’s also feeling the gathered assembly around me, the gathered Friends around me and paying attention to what might be needed: whether I’m going to be called to deliver a message or sing a song, or pray particularly for someone in the group, or might just be mindful of someone. I see that as a very communal thing, how the group comes together and is able to center in the silence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *What do you do in Meeting for Worship?*
2. *What stood out for you in the video? Did anything surprise you? Were there any practices that the speakers shared that you would like to try?*

25. Becoming Convinced

TRANSCRIPT

Convincement is that moment when the idea of being a Quaker becomes a lived reality of being a Quaker, in which the Quaker way comes into the heart and finds a home and makes a nest and settles. It's a subtle thing but it's everything also. It's everything.

Becoming Convinced

When Jesus said, "I am the way," my understanding of that is that when we come to Spirit and we say "yes" and we allow Spirit to be in us, we live in the world in a different way, and it becomes our way of being.

Overcoming Our Limitations

There is this human way of deciding things that is driven much more by ego, by fear, by our addictions to food and sex and all of those human things. And that way of being creates oppression and separation, where some small group in our culture gets to drive the agenda for their own self-interest. So it's the source of racism, it's the driver of climate change, it's what has caused oppression from the first days.

The Quaker way is not the only way to alleviate that human energy that colonizes the world and colonizes our minds, but it is one particularly skillful, particularly elegant, particularly powerful other way for us to make community together.

Convincement Is Ongoing

Maybe many people in many traditions, religions, say that convincement is a one-time thing: "I was convinced and now I am."

So I am now a Quaker and I am a member of this tribe and I'm committed to its health. But every time I say yes to something, there's a new level, a new arena, a new something that I'm ready to learn that God is calling me into, and there's a deeper connection to Spirit.

So when I first came into the Religious Society of Friends, I was not conscious of the need to work on issues of racism, to have that work be part of the perfection of a religious society, but recently I have become convinced that that is a part of my piece in this fellowship. And I don't even know what are the future pieces of convincement that need to happen in me that I need to be open to.

And so, yes, I'm a Quaker. But I'm not yet fully the Quaker that I might be. And it's when I stop and say, "Been there, done that, it's over" that I think I stop being a Quaker. And I need to maybe become convinced again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Walter says that after we become convinced, we "live in the world in a different way." Is this your experience? What changes when convincement happens?*
2. *Walter uses working on racism as the example of something that he became "convinced of" after years of already being a Friend. In your ongoing journey as a Quaker, what have you only recently become convinced of?*

26. What's The Difference Between "Programmed" and "Unprogrammed" Quaker Worship?

TRANSCRIPT

Nancy Wallace: I've worshiped with conservative Friends. I've worshipped in Central America. I've gone to Pastoral Meetings in the United States. I've gone to an Evangelical Meeting in the United States. They're all different. What I would say is that the Meetings go from - you can find a Meeting that's non-programmed, non-pastoral to a Meeting that's totally programmed, totally pastoral, and you have every possible permutation in the middle.

What's the Difference Between "Programmed" and "Unprogrammed" Quaker Worship?

Gloria Thompson: A Programmed Meeting means that we have a pastor, and we believe in reading the Bible, singing hymns – we have a piano that someone plays. And we have vocal ministry, really. Programmed means also we do enjoy the silence, there's a period of silent meditation there, and we read from the scriptures.

Jim Anderson: There are about 20 of us that gather for an hour in a period of waiting worship, and I think I would describe that as a group of people with different understandings of what they're doing. Different understandings of Quakerism. Some newcomers, some who have been there for decades. And they're all in their own way settling into a period of quiet waiting in communion and connection with one another.

Karen Gregario de Calderon: Es un programa que construye mi vida espiritual. Amo la parte de cantar porque alabo al Señor y agradezco. Amo la parte de escuchar la persona quien me va a enseñar porque Dios tiene algo preparado para mí. Amo la parte de leer la Biblia porque también Dios me habla allí. Amo la parte de orar porque recibo bendición y escucho la voz de Dios. Todo el conjunto me beneficia espiritualmente. Amo el conjunto de cosas que hacemos en, en nuestra forma de adorar.

Eduardo Diaz: For some people the silence is uncomfortable. I know for me, initially it was, with my first unprogrammed Meeting, but then I learned to love it. Because I was given the opportunity to go deep inside, and to listen to that internal antennae that I could turn on and hear God's voice, and search for guidance.

Nancy Wallace: The goal is not silence. The goal is creating the space in our very loud world so that we can hear God's voice.

Kelly Kellum: In my experience, the core of even pastoral Friends worship is that centering, open worship time which we call the silent, unprogrammed time of our worship, in which we truly do seek to heed the presence of Christ that is in our midst.

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: I don't have to believe a certain thing. I don't have to profess a certain creed. I get to sit there and listen and be and experience and go through all of those things that are necessary for me to be closer to God, and I find that to be invaluable. I find that to be the only way I know how to become that person that God has created me to be.

Ministry in the Different Traditions

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: We don't have any paid staff for our Meeting, we don't have a paid pastor or any other support staff. We gather together in silence, so we have nothing programmed in our Meeting. So we come in and we sit down, we sit in expectant waiting.

Ron Bryan: I pastored for 24 years and found it comfortable to, if I had a message prepared to deliver but open worship seemed to take on its own importance and life, it was OK to NOT present that message or sermon, and let the Spirit speak through the people within the congregation. Many times came away from a service thinking God was in control and I was not and that was OK. Very humbling, in a lot of ways to submit yourself to the Spirit's leading.

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: We expect God to talk to us. We expect God to be present. Sometimes we are given a message for ourselves. Sometimes we're given a message to share with others.

Kelly Kellum: In my tradition, after worship as the congregation is leaving, the pastor stands in the back and shakes peoples' hands, and sometimes they comment on the sermon. And someone will say something like, "I really appreciated it when you said this" and I realize I didn't say what they thought they heard, but for me it was the mysterious way in which the Spirit provided them what they needed in that moment.

Learning from One Another

Jim Anderson: I have worshiped with Friends in other traditions as well, and I would say it's one of my projects to understand better how what I find in my Quaker worship comes through these other forms into the lives of other Friends, and how we are both parts of one big tradition, each drawing on some dimension of it. Some part of this larger piece that none of us has completely.

Ron Bryan: But we bring with it quite a mixed bag of colors, ethnicities. But still you can find the common denominator is love for one another. "Love your neighbor as yourself". That's a pretty important qualifier.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Is your Meeting programmed or unprogrammed? Have you ever been to a Meeting that was on the other end of the spectrum?*
2. *Jim Anderson says, "Quaker worship comes through these other forms into the lives of other Friends, and how we are both parts of one big tradition, each drawing on some dimension of it. Some part of this larger piece that none of us has completely." Do you agree? What piece of the "one big tradition" do you feel like other Friends hold? What do we have to learn from each other?*

27. The Courage to Be a Quaker

TRANSCRIPT

Quakers believe that there is that of God or the sacred in every person and that all are equal before God.

The Courage to Be a Quaker

My name is Deborah Shaw. I live in Greensboro, North Carolina. I'm a member of Friendship Friends Meeting, which is part of North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Conservative. And I work at Guilford College, as the director of the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program.

Quakerism as Countercultural

To listen to the still, small voice does feel very countercultural. It feels like a radical step against what the world—capital-W World—is telling us to do. I think in our culture, we're told we have to figure everything out. We have to do it. There's this idea that we're fiercely independent.

The thing about the still, small voice and Quakerism, as I experience it, is that I hear something and then I go and test it with a trusted Friend. I say, "this is what I'm hearing. How does that appear to you? Does that make sense to you? I'm not holding it up against an advertisement of the newest vehicle or the newest electronic gadget, but I'm holding it in the heart. I'm asking a Friend, or a group of Friends or the Meeting to hold it in their hearts and to listen carefully themselves to "Is that right? Does it feel like that's of God? Or does that feel like it's Deborah's ego?"

Mentoring Younger Quakers

In my work with the Quaker Leadership Scholars at Guilford College, I often find myself talking to them—18 to 21 year olds—about the radical courage it takes to stand against the culture. The culture is so insidious and overwhelming. Everywhere we are, we are bombarded by it constantly, and it is telling us something very different than what our Quaker faith tells us, or what the still, small voice tells us, or what our inward teacher tells us.

So I say to them, it is a hard path to choose and to walk. And you need allies in it, and you need people who are trying to do the same thing. To do it alone is virtually impossible. To stand against the culture, and to stand against the influx. Just the continual bombardment of the culture, which is telling us we're not worthy, which is a lie. That we're not worthy unless we do these certain things and buy these other things and act a certain way or achieve this certain goal of material possessions. There's so much of it.

Or that we're not thin enough or that our noses aren't right. It just takes a lot of courage and companionship to say, "No. I am a beloved child of God, just as I am. With all of my imperfections and yes, I'm striving to be more perfect and more whole and more fully who I'm supposed to be but even as I am right this minute, I'm a beloved child of God."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Does being a Quaker take courage? Where do you find courage?*
2. *Deborah says that Quakerism "is a hard path to choose and to walk." Do you agree? She also says, "you need allies in it, and you need people who are trying to do the same thing. To do it alone is virtually impossible." Where do you find those allies? What are we doing together?*

28. A Quaker in the Texas House of Representatives

TRANSCRIPT

A lot of times people think that they can make peace by doing war, and that's just so ludicrous on the face of it. I mean, it's almost a scientific fact of physics that if you do violence, you create more violence. The only way to avoid violence is to create peace and to create justice.

A Quaker in the Texas House of Representatives

My name is Lon Burnam, I'm from Fort Worth, Texas, and for 18 years I served a district in inner city Fort Worth in the Texas legislature.

The Friend in Washington is a very interesting and compelling place to be, which is the function I'm serving right now. I'm a full time volunteer at the Friends Committee on National Legislation and I have a special assignment of trying to help the legislative team develop closer working relationships with the Texas delegation.

The Texas delegation is really a large delegation, and there are very few Quakers in Texas, so they don't hear from that many Quakers, so it's a special mission – if you will – to the Texas delegation while I'm here.

Witnessing to Peace in Politics

You know if there's anything fundamental to Quakerism, I think it's the peace testimony, and when you start trying to explain that to people it is sometimes difficult, particularly in my part of the world where the culture and the economy so revolve around weapons production and employment in the military.

Early in my legislative career, I had to take some stands that were not comfortable, but because of my core values I had to oppose efforts enhancing enforcement in punishment for selective service registration violation. That was my first session in the legislature. By the time we got to 2003, I was the only person willing to say on the House floor, "It is always bad public policy to start a war, and we should reject this pro-war resolution."

I picked up 5 or 6 votes out of 150, so I was not very persuasive in the political context of Texas, but at least by that 4th session in the legislature, everybody knew that I was a Quaker, and I thought that was a particularly useful form of witness.

I mean, to me, the 3 major monotheistic religions, the whole basis for them is to understand the importance of right relationships with other human beings and with God, and right relationships does not include killing people or doing harm to them.

Seeking a Faith Community

Most people might be surprised to know that I never even met a Quaker until I was an undergraduate at the University of Texas in Austin during the Vietnam War years and I started going to the Meetinghouse related to anti-war activity.

I had never experienced the manner of worship of Friends, and that prayerful time on Sunday morning with this group of Friends who shared similar values and concerns was very helpful and supportive to me, and I found that it came to sustain me through the week, and then I felt a need to go back over and over again for that period of worship.

I, in essence, have had the same experience attending FCNL in November. Particularly during the time when I was serving as the director of the Dallas Peace Center, I modeled a lot of what I tried to do in the North Texas community based on what I learned observing at FCNL Meetings.

How Quakers Can Influence Policy and Prevent the Next War

The Friends Committee on National Legislation is a Quaker organization that's inclusive well beyond Quakers, but it was founded by Quakers back during the middle of World War II when we recognized that we made every mistake possible in ending World War I and we set the stage for the inevitable World War II. Quakers were determined for that to not happen again.

We're proactively for preventing the causes of war, and that really comes down to meeting everybody's basic needs. Most wars, although they're called "ideological" and you have religions fighting religions, are really about resource allocation. And so we need to change the global thinking about what's needed and what's necessary and what's right and appropriate.

We want politicians pandering the best instincts and values of people, and that's the reason voting's not enough. It's kind of like the baseline, bottom line, that's the least you can do to pay your rent for living in this democracy, but every – certainly Quaker, with our concerns and values – has a responsibility to do more than just vote – to do more than just develop opinions and read. We had a line at the Dallas Peace Center: "Research, Education, Action". We need all 3 from Friends if we're going to make this a better world for all of us and all of our children.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Lon says, "the only way to avoid violence is to create peace and to create justice." Do you agree with this strategy? Are there scenarios where you would question it?*
2. *Do you think that Quaker should be active in politics? How can we help shape policy and prevent the next war?*

29. Do Quakers Drink Alcohol?

TRANSCRIPT

“Do Quaker Drink Alcohol?” That’s an interesting question, as well. For a long time, probably from the early 1800s well into the mid 20th century, if you heard the term “Quaker” you thought abstemious, you thought teetotal. And that was largely the case, but early Quakers drank because it was about the only healthful drink you had available to you.

Drinking in the 17th Century

The water was polluted; it’s what did in the Brontë sisters. Milk you couldn’t cool sufficiently; you’d get rubella from it. So, early Quaker boarding schools actually had breweries on the premises to provide healthful drink for the scholars. And when the Barclay family of Quakers in the 1700s bought the Anchor Brewing Company and Samuel Johnson heard about it, he coined the famous phrase: “This will make them richer than the dreams of Croesus.”

So Quakers had breweries, and they drank alcohol, but in moderation. George Fox himself drank, but one of his early openings, when he was in a tavern and his friends were encouraging him to get into a drinking contest, he said, I’m just not going to be in that silliness. It wasn’t an opposition to drink, it was the silliness of having drinking contests.

Opiate of the Masses: Alcohol in the Industrial Revolution

By the early 1800s, Quaker on both sides of the Atlantic recognized that alcohol was having a devastating impact on society. In England it was a gin-sodden society. People who were suffering—read Marx sometime, *Das Kapital*—the whole critique of industrial revolution and the crushing lives that people led.

What was that opiate of the masses? For some it was religion. For others it was alcohol, and for some it was opium. In America, it was “the whiskey republic.” And not only because of the crushing—read John Woolman sometime—how he talks about how people who oppress their labor often forced them into drowning their sorrows in drink at the end of a long crushing day of labor. Or, how rum was used to defraud Indians of their pelts and their land. So, he stops selling rum in his store.

But also because, as people settled in the great heartland, the breadbasket of America, on the other side of the Appalachians, before there was an adequate transportation system, they were growing all this corn, wheat, and barley. How do you ship it to those markets in the east? You distill it into hogsheads of alcohol. And we were just awash in whiskey and with all the impact of that: people drinking away their wages, and abuse, and violence.

So, by the early 1800s, as part of a broader Evangelical Christian reform movement, Quakers had become teetotal abstemious, and it’s still a testimony of many Friends not to use alcohol.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *As Max Carter tells it, Quakers became opposed to alcohol when it became the “opiate of the masses” during the industrial revolution. What areas of our lives might this apply to today?*
2. *Does your Quaker faith lead you to abstain from any of society’s “excesses”? What does that look like for you?*

30. Quakers and Migrant Justice

TRANSCRIPT

Lori Fernald Khamala: I disagree when I hear people talk about an immigration “problem.” There is no problem with immigration. Immigration is not the problem. People move. People have always moved.

The problem is policies that criminalize our immigrant brothers and sisters. The problem is policies which are tearing apart families and which are not honoring the human dignity of our brothers and sisters who were born in another land.

Quakers and Migrant Justice

My name is Fatima Cisse. I’m 24 years old, and when I was 11, my mom was deported back to the Ivory Coast. I just remember coming home from school and my father told me that she had been arrested, and I was shocked because my mom was never into any trouble before. It was shocking.

The Impact on Families

In our culture, the mom is the one who takes care of the children and the home and everything, so we lost all of that, and my father, we barely saw him—working two jobs and trying to pay off the bills and everything. So it was very hard on us. There’s a lot of pain behind that. We feel lonely and not all the way together, like there’s broken pieces in a puzzle.

Lori Fernald Khamala: We see millions of children living in mixed status families. This means that they may be US citizens, but at least one parent is undocumented. We have millions of children living in this mixed status situation which produces a tremendous amount of uncertainty and fear of loss of a parent to deportation.

How Ignorance Breeds Fear

When politicians will make disparaging remarks about Mexicans or about people from other countries, it’s usually because it’s coming from a place of fear or a place of ignorance, or a place of not really having had the opportunity to meet and to know and to interact with migrants who are newly arrived in this country.

Healing Our Communities

Fatima Cisse: Finally, at age 16, a friend of my father’s introduced us to the American Friends Service, and they gave us a better picture about immigration and explained to us that when I turn 21, I could be able to apply for my Mom to come to the country. I finally turned 21 and we put the papers in. It was like a dream come true. It took a long time, I almost gave up at one point, but I feel very happy. I feel like my family is back together.

Pedro Rios: So what would a community look like that has been healed? I think that’s a great question that we face, ourselves, because we are in a process of constant healing. I think one of the dialogue processes would be entering into a conversation about how we walk together, shoulder to shoulder, and that’s one aspect that the American Friends Service Committee has done. They provide the resources where we can walk together with communities.

What Quakers Can Do

Lori Fernald Khamala: I believe as Quakers we have a lot more that we can offer this conversation, about how we acknowledge the light of God in every individual, how we treat people in general, how we accept a biblical mandate of welcoming the stranger.

Pedro Rios: If you are a Quaker who wants to get involved and wants to participate in the issue of immigration, I would say, begin with your local Meeting or begin with local organizations that you are already in contact with. It would be a process of, essentially, building from where you know and finding ways of connecting and being in solidarity with communities elsewhere.

Lori Fernald Khamala: So I would encourage everyone to invite speakers to your Meetings, to your congregations, to your offices, to your school groups, because there's people out there who are willing to share their stories.

I really encourage Quakers, other people of faith out there, to get involved with the local immigrant rights movement or the local center that's working on immigration issues, because I think we can start by being good partners.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Many of us have immigrants in our family history. What stories do we know of our ancestors' movement—voluntary or coerced? What was it like to live in a new land?*
2. *According to immigration rights worker Lori Khamala, "As Quakers we have a lot more that we can offer this conversation, about how we acknowledge the light of God in every individual, how we treat people in general, how we accept a biblical mandate of welcoming the stranger." Do you agree? What do we have to offer?*

31. A Quaker Lobbyist on Capitol Hill

TRANSCRIPT

There's something about Quakerism that calls us into the work directly, that tied to our faith is, sort of, you kind of expect yourself to live out the Gospels and the challenges to be to one another the way we would want to be in the world.

A Quaker Lobbyist on Capitol Hill

My name is Ruth Flower. I live in Takoma Park, Maryland, and my work is that I'm legislative director at Friends Committee on National Legislation. FCNL is a network of Quakers all over the country who want to affect public policy, and they get involved in it by relating to the staff here in Washington who keep a really close tab on what's going on on the Hill.

We work on everything from peace issues, how to get out of whatever war we're in right now and how to prevent the next one, environmental issues, how to save this planet before it's completely gone, and the justice issues and the economic issues that affect so many people here. We have about, let's see, seven lobbyists, plus program assistants that work with them. We have a communications team, a strategic advocacy team. We're rarin' to go.

A Quaker Approach to Lobbying

Quakers have had their hands in change in a lot of ways, from direct service, helping people, doing Friends Ambulance Service during the war, feeding children, all of these kinds of things. And marching with the Suffragettes and helping to lead these movements as well. Lobbying is just a part of it. Lobbying is something that a good number of us want to do because it's a way to just talk to another human being.

I think it's very much part of our faith as Quakers that we talk to everybody. We just do. And that's been kind of a slogan that we use on our various coalitions that we're in. When nobody wants to talk to a certain office, I'll say Quakers will talk to them. I'll confess, I will look at their websites and think, oh my goodness this is going to be uncomfortable. But, we'll go in, and, you know, introduce ourselves and ask them what they think about this issue, this problem, and work on having an open conversation and we'll have an open conversation. It's the most amazing thing. I surprise myself over and over again.

Lobbying As a Spiritual Practice

When I enter an office to lobby anybody, and I don't care what side of the aisle they're on, I'm always nervous. I do remind myself that God is in the room, and that there is that of God in everyone, including myself—brings me strength, brings me joy—and in the person that I'm speaking with. I can lose track of that during the conversation, if a few things are said that kind of shock me. But it's kind of like deep breathing.

To go back to that understanding that there's that of God in this person, and that's who I'm speaking to... I'm not speaking to the fear, I'm not speaking to whatever training the person has given themselves to get through the world as they see it. I'm speaking to their better part, to that of God.

Join Us!

If you were a person that really wants to be part of this particular way of making change, you can join with FCNL and the kinds of things that we do by going to our website. You look at a tab called Action and under that, you can find ways that you can specify things that you would like to receive from us.

If you just choose those things that speak to your heart! If it is world peace, we have plenty for you. If it is poverty, we have plenty for you. We have things where you can hook on and make a difference in those areas. You can do things about climate change in your own area.

We have just gotten a Republican-only bill introduced on climate change, and that was done by local people in local districts meeting with their member of congress that they thought they knew and that they thought that they didn't like. They do like them now. They're authors of the only Republican-only bill in congress on climate change. So, you can do things that make a huge difference moving forward, just by doing your part.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Ruth Flower says that the way Quakers approach lobbying is to talk to anyone, no matter what assumptions we might have about them. Where do you think this approach comes from? How do these principles play out in our lives in other ways?*
2. *Ruth says that when she goes into a politician's office, she's talking to "that of God" in them. What does she mean? What situation have you been in where you were speaking to "that of God in someone else?"*

32. Why Traveling Ministry is Vital for Quakers in the 21st Century

TRANSCRIPT

Noah Baker Merrill: The Quaker movement is sort of like an original edition of the network Church. From the beginning, it has been about this life-changing spiritual movement where people who are coming alive in these spiritual practices are transmitting that energy and that fire from each node in that network, from community to community to community.

Like the circulatory system in the body, helping the oxygen flow to all the places that it's needed, the traveling ministers were, and are, this crucial means of maintaining the wholeness of the tradition and of helping the movement be aware of itself.

Why Traveling Ministry Is Vital for Quakers in the 21st Century

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: Traveling ministry amongst the religious society of Friends comes out of the concept that every person is a minister. As we travel in the ministry, what that means is that I've been called to take that of God within me to people outside of my home community, and sometimes that's to another monthly meeting. Sometimes that's to a different yearly meeting, and sometimes that's across the globe.

Experiencing Quakerism Through Another Lens

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: I think it's really important to be able to broaden our definition of Quaker, to be able to broaden who we are as a Quaker. We do that by interactions with people who are not like us.

Jim Anderson: In a world in which we typically have our own little kind of cardboard images of Quakers from other traditions, what we need to get beyond that is to have a person whose life is shaped by some other tradition come and engage with us.

Gloria Thompson: For example, I'm accustomed to programmed meeting. Send me to the unprogrammed. Send me to the evangelical over there in California or the Western part of the United States. Send me out so that you can bring something fresh to the people and I think that's what they're seeking after. Something to renew their minds and wake up.

The Cure for Isolation

Nancy Wallace: Meetings can become very isolated and sort of self focused, and having a minister come in is just a very opening experience. They provide a new viewpoint that is just really quite remarkable.

Kenya Casanova Sales: For Cubans, we were isolated for around 20 to 30 years. So the first time that we received traveling ministers after that isolation was a very big blessing for Cuba's Yearly Meeting. To listen about Friends, about what are Friends doing in other countries, what are their experiences. And we felt that we were not alone in the world.

Renewing Our Faith

Kenya Casanova Sales: At first, it encourages your faith, and that's a very important thing. We have learned to listen, we have learned to be open, to be open-minded to other approaches to the Spirit.

Jim Anderson: It's just a healthy and enlarging opportunity for us to welcome guests into our home, our Quaker home, receive them with hospitality, even if in a certain sense they might be strangers, and learn from them, and give them our own experience to carry to the next place.

Strengthening Our Meetings

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: The Friends World Committee for Consultation is starting a traveling ministry corps. This particular group of people will be traveling between the branches of Quakerism to be able to enhance and increase the communication and understanding between the branches of Quakerism.

Noah Baker Merrill: Traditionally and still in many places today, the arrival of a traveling minister would be a reason to have a Meeting for Worship, because who knew what the Spirit was going to do in that moment? And often a Meeting that's struggling with a particular issue hears something that they need to hear from that visitor who's come in, or maybe there's a gift that person has for pastoral care or to recognize someone else in that local community that's just right on the edge of bursting into flame in terms of their spiritual life or their direction, their vocation in the world.

Kristin Olson-Kennedy: When we bring in another piece of the puzzle into that community, all of the sudden maybe we see things a little differently. Maybe we understand things in a new way. Maybe a brand new perspective has been given to us so that us as a community gets to grow also.

Jim Anderson: People from another Meeting, even in our own tradition, bring to it a kind of freshness, the kinds of questions that we normally wouldn't ask one another.

Noah Baker Merrill: No local community is going to have all of the gifts that are needed. This is a way of sharing that much more broadly and trusting that when we open ourselves to God's abundance we really can be given everything we need.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Noah Baker Merrill says, "No local community is going to have all of the gifts that are needed. This is a way of sharing that much more broadly and trusting that when we open ourselves to God's abundance we really can be given everything we need." Do you agree? How might your local Quaker community benefit from receiving a traveling minister?*
2. *Who are the Friends outside of your local Meeting community who have had a major impact on your faith journey?*