

Living in Vital Relationship

by Corey Beals, George Fox University

The lights are out and I can't see my own hand. I am groping and wondering when I might stumble into God. And then I hear the query, "Do I live in vital relationship with God?" and am asked, "Is Christ's presence evident in my life?" Now *that* can be an intimidating question. Is Christ's presence even evident to *me*? What does it mean to live in a vital relationship, anyway?

I read in Acts 17:25 that God has given me my very "life and breath." What does that mean? Did God just make my life and breath like some big clock and then leave me to tick along all in God's absence? Maybe so, since I can't seem to see God. I read further and see that I was put on the earth so that I would "search for God and perhaps grope for him." Well, yes, that's me. I'm searching, even groping. But will I find God? Paul then writes that perhaps I may "grobe for him and find him...indeed he is not far from each one of us." Well, that's just frustrating! I don't see him, so how can he be 'not far'? And then I read the remarkable: "*In him we live and move and have our being.*" Really? Every breath? Every pulse of blood? Through my entire being? It doesn't say *out* of him, or *from* him, but *in* him. Really? If that is true, then perhaps Meister Eckhart is right when he said that "God is closer to me than I am to myself."

If my very breath and lifeblood are in God, then that is closer than I can even see. Perhaps that's the problem. I'm trying to

Continued on page 2



Living in Vital Relationship...

Continued from page 1

see that which sustains me, and the only way to see it would be to be outside of it, or to take myself out of the place God wants me.

So perhaps the clue is that I don't look to 'see' God—that is, to 'understand' in the way that I say, "I see what you mean." But perhaps the clue is in groping in the dark, turning my attention to every breath I take. Thomas Kelly writes,

"There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we can be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship, and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings."

In the midst of every breath I take, God is present whether I 'feel' it or not. The vital life involves my *receptiveness* or attention to the sacred presence of God in every breath I take. And in every breath that my *neighbor* takes.

But how do I live this vital life? I am far from practicing the constant presence of God, but one practice that has moved me deeper into this life of divine attention is the ancient Christian breath prayer. Breath prayers are meant to be said with or under every breath. The one I practice was first spoken by the repentant tax collector in Luke 18:13, and has been used by Christians for centuries since—it is called the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." I simply say (out loud or in my head), "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God" as I inhale, and then "have mercy on me" as I exhale. Then I do it again, and again.

I try to do it as often as I can, and will even pray for others by saying their name instead of 'me' in the prayer.

I may say or think that God is present, but it's another thing to convince my entire being of that fact. I grope. I breathe. I find. I forget. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. 🌱

A longer version of this article, and the opportunity to respond, can be located on our website: nwfriends.org/connection.



Corey Beals, here with his family, Jill, Jonathan, and Daniel, teaches religion and philosophy at George Fox University.

Leadings of the Holy Spirit

by Karen Oberst, Klamath Falls Friends Church

There are many ways God leads in our lives. One kind of leading may be more like a nudge. I had dusted off my Greek and was doing an in-depth study of the Sermon on the Mount. Going not only verse by verse, but word by word was teaching me so much that I knew I had to share the discoveries I was making. And so the book *But I Tell You* was born. Not only did this nudge from God enable me to share my discoveries with others, but it let me fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming a published author.

Sometimes God speaks more audibly. I was praying, asking God to show me a place I could be of service. A friend told me she was in a singing group that went to nursing homes, and asked if I would like to come. I laughed and said no, for I'm no great singer. But as I was walking home, God spoke to me, not aloud, but in distinct words I heard in my mind. "Excuse me? You ask for a place to be of service; I put one in your lap and you say no?" So I told my friend I would join the group. It was fun and the folks in the nursing homes didn't care that I was not a perfect singer.

Sometimes we need help discovering God's direction in our lives. More than once God has spoken to me through a book I was reading or the voice of a friend. Quaker practice allows for more structured ways as well. When I was trying to make up my mind whether or not to leave a job I called a Clearness Committee, which consisted of people with deep spiritual discernment, and those I trusted to ask me hard questions. When our session ended, the answer was clear. I was to stay at my job. It was not the answer I wanted, but it was the right one for the time.

However, a right answer for *a* time is not the right answer for *all* time. Two or three years after the Clearness Committee I was again wondering whether to leave my job. This time the answer was clear—yes, now it was time to leave. When I did, I felt a tremendous confirmation. My life is better in every way, except financially. But even there I have seen God taking care of me in amazing ways.

God can lead in many ways in our lives. How is God leading you today? 🌱



Karen Oberst, is a member of the NWYM Board of Communications.

Her recent book *But I Tell You*, is available at barclaypress.com. Karen also assists people in writing meaningful blessings.

Latino and Anglo Cooperation in Worship

by Ken Comfort, Reedwood Friends

Mario Macias walked into my office in May 2006, along with Angel and Hernan Diaz (of Newberg and Vancouver). “We want to introduce you to our friend,” they said. The Latino Ministries Task Force of Northwest Yearly Meeting was hoping to start a Latino ministry in Portland. Four months later, Colin Saxton, Angel, Marvin Mardock (Newberg), and I met to consider Mario for a position at Reedwood. Mario came to us from a Baptist background. He had pastored in several American Baptist churches in California, Florida and Oregon and had traveled to Cuba

to minister on more than thirty occasions. Mario may have ministered among American Baptists for fifteen years but what we saw and heard of his testimony that afternoon concurred with Friends ministry.

Mario came to the United States as an undocumented immigrant when he was a child. His father was abusive to his mother and Mario took on the role of provider and protector. Mario has many stories of crossing from Mexico into the USA with different family members. Sometimes they hung precariously under rail cars across the desert, other times they ran from the border patrol and hid until nightfall to continue their journey to freedom. Mario is now a legal resident and he received his green card in 1973. His goal is to become a citizen in 2010. Mario finished high school in 1975 in Mexico.



Queries are thoughtful questions that Friends use for self-evaluation and discipleship.

Each query is designed to initiate a dialogue between the Holy Spirit and the pray-er.

In this manner, Friends have tried to hold their lifestyle and beliefs in the penetrating and evaluating light of Christ. A full list of queries can be found under the *Connection* tab of our website. This month’s query refers to our concern for society.

Query 1- “Do you live in vital relationship with God, trusting in Jesus Christ as your saving Lord and obeying the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Is Christ’s presence evident in your life?”

How do you respond to these penetrating questions? Join in the online discussion to share and learn from one another. Check out the “Queries” link on the *Connection* page of our website.

He graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity in 1993.

At Reedwood Mario says he has found his heart's true home. "The Friends emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in worship and everyday life is so important." He adds that the Friends doctrine is so close to his understanding of the message of the gospel that he wonders how it was he did not know about the Friends church before now. Mario has read George Fox's *Journal* and other Spanish translations of Quaker books from my library. He has been impacted by Fox's testimony for today. We talk about Friends history and doctrine continuously. He is amazed and encouraged by who the Friends are and the testimonies that we maintain. Mario became a member of Reedwood Friends in December of 2007.

The Latino ministry at Reedwood has taken root. Mario now disciples over thirty people from four countries, on a week to week basis. There are many more that he has contact with and is considered their pastor even though they do not yet attend Reedwood Friends Church. Mario has been an integral part of our vision of starting outreach into the Latino community of Portland. Reedwood does not want to start an independent worship group but has been intentional about integrating the two languages and cultures into one unified body.

God is calling us to be one church that speaks more than one language and where there is no difference based on nationality or race. The Latino people who now attend Reedwood are amazed that the Anglos treat them as equals and seek their opinions about how the integration is happening. They feel they are part of a large family of equals. Mario is a valuable part of Reedwood's ministry team and is considered not only the Latino Ministries pastor but a minister to the whole congregation. He is appreciated for his insight and counsel in many situations. He is a gifted preacher and he prays constantly for the concerns of the church. 🌍

Respond to this article under the Connection tab at our website.



Mario Macias ministers alongside Ken Comfort at Reedwood Friends, as the Latino Ministries pastor.

Peace Trunks Prove to be Valuable Resources

by Ron Myers, Camas Friends

Need help? Who are you going to call? The yearly meeting office!

“Needing help” was where we found ourselves at Camas Friends Church as we began planning for our third annual Peace Playhouse. After two successful years, we decided it was time to put in extra effort to develop a program that would be so clearly laid out any one of us could carry out the activities on fairly short notice. This would provide insurance in case the person assigned to lead an activity was unable to be present at the scheduled time.

We remembered that before the yearly meeting’s reorganization, the Peace and Social Concerns Committee had developed Peace Trunks. The chests were now over at the Center for Peace and Justice at George Fox University under the care of Lon Fendall (West Chehalis) and his associates.

The folks at the Center were incredibly helpful. There are three Peace Trunks—one each for primary, middle, and high school grades. Lon sent us a copy of the bibliography for both the primary and middle school trunks. After reviewing the bibliographies, we decided that the middle school trunk was most appropriate.

Our next step was to bring the trunk back to Camas. All of us planning the Peace Playhouse had adequate time to pore over the trunk’s treasures. There were videos with peace-themed folktales and skits. There were storybooks focused on peace themes. Most important to us were the dozen or so instructional books on how to teach peace through arts, crafts, drama, games, etc.

We decided to purchase six of the books for our own continuing use—for future peace camps but also for Sunday school or children’s church curriculums. We were also introduced to the Peace Education Foundation and eventually purchased



Evelyn Myers leads a discussion around peace issues with the Peace Playhouse campers.

a teacher's guide, poster, and bookmarks featuring conflict resolution steps.

We decided to develop a curriculum, describing each activity in a notebook. That way anyone could do the activity during the camp. We had a curriculum committee that developed the activities for each day and assigned who would lead them. The Peace Playhouse was designed for three days for children going into the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

Our overall goals were to teach the children peace-making and conflict resolution skills and to send them as peace ambassadors into our community. Each of the days had a theme: respect for self; respect for others; and respect for the earth. This year the campers kept journals and created a mural focused on the daily theme. They also joined in music, crafts (like decorating a set of personalized cloth napkins), gardening, skits, and dialog about what peace means in each person's life as well as strategies for handling conflict. The Peace Playhouse is part of our ongoing Quaker witness to our community. We had 21 children this year, our largest number yet!



Kids enjoy learning activities including crafts and songs, which teach about God's desire for peacemaking.

We had one returning camper who was quite shy last year. Her mother told us that her daughter often didn't stay for the whole camp. She was thrilled this year when we sent out a notice to previous campers. During the camp, she was very involved and thoughtful about what the activities actually meant. She will be too old next year to attend, but hopes to come and be a volunteer helper.

While the camp was valuable for teaching conflict resolution skills to the children, an additional benefit was actually to us as a church. Almost everyone in the church was involved in the Peace Playhouse. We grew closer together in doing a worthwhile activity that had a valuable purpose. 🌱

A longer version of this story, with more photos, is available under the Connection tab of our website.

Pursuing Honesty in Christ's Name

by Johan, Friend Serving Abroad in Russia

I've got a secret.

I was not entirely surprised when I found bottles of Smirnoff's vodka behind books on the bookshelves of our childhood home. My father was still showing signs of heavy drinking, even though he had promised to quit, so the stuff had to be somewhere.



In those years, I kept my own secrets in a different way—the small padlocked cabinet I built in my high school carpentry class. There I stashed the money I saved by not eating lunches at school, and I kept the diaries in which I confided my anxieties about the hidden alcohol. (I still have the diaries, locked up at a bank!)

That experience with the vodka bottles made me think about secrecy, privacy, and discretion. Surely my father had a right to privacy—but the costs and consequences of addiction were anything but private for the rest of our family. Four decades later, I'm still thinking about how to distinguish legitimate privacy from toxic secrecy. I love the English constitutional tradition that "one's home is one's castle," where nobody can intrude without due process. But what good is privacy if I misuse it?

We don't just choose between complete secrecy and total transparency: there is a place for discretion, for establishing a relationship and a common language, and considering the interests of others. For example, Russians are naturally curious about our motives for living here. To avoid playing into unhelpful stereotypes of cold warriors or arrogant evangelists, we work hard at building relationships that authentically communicate our desire to serve and bless their country. Context first, words later.

In the end, I think I know when secrecy is both toxic and absurd—when we are doing something we really don't want

God to know about. But here's the hard part: it's not just God and me. How many addicts live in constant, secret shame before God? But God uses our brothers and sisters in Christ to help keep us honest.

Are you wondering whether you're being secretive or simply discreet? Maybe it's time to ask God for someone who might become that worthy partner in honesty! 🌱

Spotlight

An Update from Dan Cammack, clerk of the Board of Global Outreach and former missionary to Bolivia and Peru.

The Board of Global Outreach continues to cultivate relationships with the two yearly meetings that NWYM planted in South America. In August of this year the Dan Cammack family (pictured below) spent three weeks among Friends in Peru. They visited churches and homes and participated in two conferences. The Cammacks were impressed with the leadership's vision for missions.

In January, a delegation from NWYM will go to Bolivia yearly meeting's annual business sessions to celebrate our history of working together and to explore the future of our relationship. The delegation is made up of Hal Thomas (North Valley), Quentin Nordyke (Newberg), his son Kevin, and Dan Cammack (Tigard). Hal and Quentin are former NWYM missionaries to Bolivia. Kevin was born there. The delegation will visit both La Paz and Santa Cruz, arriving in Bolivia on January 6 and heading back to Oregon on January 18.

Tami, Rebekah, Forrest, Dan and Will gather with Jacoba, Santusa and Rogelio in Tacna, Peru.



Updates on Ministries

■ Nintey-six women attended the **Friends Women combined retreat** at Twin Rocks, October 1-4. Do you receive their newsletter, *Quaker Waggin's*? If not, request a subscription from Reta Stuart, via the NWYM office.



National Latino leaders gather for a conference in New York.

■ Angel Diaz, NWYM Latino Ministries Coordinator, joined about 58 Latino Friends church representatives and pastors from Canada, Mexico and the United States in New York, October 7-11, 2009. This was the 13th annual meeting of the **Latino Friends Conference of North America**. This conference was held in Newberg in 2002 and many families from Newberg Friends Church helped by opening their homes for more than 100 delegates from different regions. This past conference had workshops about leadership among Latino Friends, counseling, education, history, music and evangelism. Different evening speakers challenged the participants about building the Kingdom of God. Almost 150 people were present for worship gatherings.

In July 2009, Angel attended the **Annual Conference of Latino Friends Churches in Mexico City**. On the last day more than 300 people attended the worship service. There is a growing number of Friends churches in Mexico. Some are in great need of repair or construction of new rooms, especially the central church, but they don't have enough financial support. While several NWYM churches work with non-Friends groups over Spring Break, Angel would like to challenge a church with a project at a Mexican Friends church. Please contact him if you are interested: diazangel56@yahoo.com

■ **Ministry transitions** include *Amy Watson* as youth pastor at Sherwood Friends. And *Eric Muhr* will be moving from Southern Idaho, where he has been worshipping with Melba Friends, to become the youth pastor at Newberg Friends. Josh Reid, formerly at Newberg, is now teaching Bible at Westside Christian High School in Tigard, Oregon.

■ Recent reporting shows attendance at the yearly meeting's **Latino ministry points** to be: Newberg, 80; Casa del Alfarero (Greenleaf), 30; Tierra de Regocijo (Caldwell), 50; Gresham, 30; Vancouver, 30; Reedwood, 40; McMinnville, 25; Mision de Cristo (Salem), 10; Clackamas Park, 5. Approximately 300 people are involved in our Latino ministry points!

■ **Living Water Ministries**, a ministry point in Plummer, Idaho, recently held a “Spirit Jam” dance and music outreach. Videos are available at nwfriends.org/local-voices

■ Our **Thanksgiving offering**, to begin three clean-water microbusinesses in Burundi, had a goal of \$9,000. Preliminary reports from churches put our combined gifts at over \$26,000! What a blessing you have provided for the people of Burundi. Check out our website for information about the project.

■ At the back of the **Green Plow ministry point** coffeehouse in Redmond, Oregon, there is an extra space being transformed into a meeting room. The downtown merchants group, a women’s Bible study, and a cross-denominational youth pastors’ gathering have already used it. A book club, craft group and Spanish/English conversation group have also expressed interest. One exciting possibility in the works is an interactive conversational worship group hosted by several churches. Pray for this fledgling idea: that denominational pride and logistics will be non-issues, and that they will gather those who desire to know God but have felt alienated. Read more at www.greenplowcoffee.com

NWYM News & Announcements

■ **Midyear Boards**, the gathering for all board members and representatives, will be January 29-30.

■ **Jr. High Jamboree**, our winter retreat for middle schoolers, will take place February 12-15, at Twin Rocks Friends Camp. For more information, contact Joseph Thouvenel joseph@twinrocks.org

■ Joseph Thouvenel, graduating from **George Fox Evangelical Seminary** in December, began his course of study eight years ago with no idea he would begin working in full-time ministry. His work as Program Director at Twin Rocks Friends Camp fits together with his Master of Arts in Theological Studies with an emphasis in Christian History and Thought. He plans to continue at Twin Rocks while also pursuing opportunities to teach. Joseph is considering more graduate work in the future, with the hope of one day teaching at the university level full-time.



Joseph Thouvenel, here with his wife Stephanie, is graduating from George Fox Evangelical Seminary.

■ **Youth Challenged to Expand their Worldview** (YCEW) is traveling to Aguascalientes, Mexico, June 30-July 19. Information and application packets can be found at nwfriends.org/youth.

■ NWYM is on **Facebook**, and is daily featuring articles from our local church newsletters and websites. Check it out to stay in touch with the wider community of NWYM. nwfriends.org/fb

■ **Friends Men's retreats** will be held February 19-21 at Quaker Hill and February 26-28 at Twin Rocks. Registration, speakers, themes and prices can be found at nwfriends.org/friends-men.

■ The **Immigration Advocacy** ministry team, under the board of Local Outreach, has been hard at work this fall. Their vision statement says: "We envision the ability of our citizen congregations, in partnership with our growing number of Latino congregations, to be able to provide the necessary and current information and trustworthy counsel about existing immigration laws and processes to pastors, church leaders, and those in

the congregations, including their wider social networks, who are affected by US immigration policy.” Interested in being part of the discussion? Sign up at nwfriends.org/immigration-advocacy.

On October 28, four members of the ministry team (John Munson, Hal Thomas, Jim Fisher and Jennifer Perez) met with **Brian Ølin-ski** **Congressman** **Øavid Wu’s staff person** in charge of immigration issues. The purpose of the meeting was to encourage Congressman Wu to make immigration reform a high priority. They presented him with a letter that highlighted the resolution on immigration reform recently adopted by the National Association of Evangelicals (of which the NWYM was a founding member).

Brian seemed encouraged to hear from constituents who are supportive of the Congressman’s position on immigration.

■ The Peace Education subcommittee, under the board of Christian Education and Discipleship has named January as NWYM’s **Ørst annual Øeace Month**. The theme, “What is Peace?” provides a starting point for discussion about peace in its multifaceted forms. Peace can be a way to live out the two greatest commandments: loving

ØWYM Calendar of Events

- January 2Ø.....Bible QuiØ
Sherwood Friends Church
- January 2Ø-Ø0Midyear Boards
Newberg Friends Church
- Januray 2Ø-Ø0.....Using Drama in Worship,
Friends Center at GFES
- February 12-1Ø.....Jr. High Jamboree
Twin Rocks Friends Camp
- February 1Ø-21Friends Men Retreat,
Quaker Hill
- February 2Ø-1Ø.....Friends Men Retreat,
Twin Rocks

God, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Resources for all ages help churches explore what this means.

For information and resources, including a daily devotional, visit nwfriends.org/peacemonth or email the subcommittee at peaceeducation@nwfriends.org.

■ The Friends Center at George Fox Evangelical Seminary is hosting Rich Swingle (a former Medford Friends member) on January 29-30, 2010. He will be presenting a one-credit course on **using drama in ministry**. Contact Carole Spencer, cspencer@georgefox.edu

NWYM Foundation:

Services to Assist with Estate Planning

Are you among the nearly sixty percent of Americans who don't have a current estate plan? Realizing this is a confusing process for most people, several northwest Friends ministries have banded together to develop a program to help people in this difficult area of their lives. (Those ministries are: NWYM Foundation, Friendsview Retirement Community, Twin Rocks Friends Camp, and George Fox University).

What makes this new initiative so unique? No insurance or investment products are sold in the process. It's been designed completely as a service for those who need assistance. The goal is simply to serve people well as they determine what God would have them do with their earthly possessions. And the service is available to Friends throughout the Pacific Northwest who might have questions about their estate plan.

Together, these ministries have asked Gene Christian, a well-known estate planning expert, to lead this effort. Gene has a long-standing record of service with church and parachurch organizations throughout the Northwest, including many of our Friends churches. Because of the positive feedback that has been received, it was determined this is an important service that should be offered to all churches who are aligned with Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends.

Again, Gene has nothing to sell or to gain personally, by helping you update, or develop, a God-honoring estate plan. This truly is a service for anyone who needs assistance in this often complicated area of their lives. You can reach Gene at 1-877-964-2300 or email him at gene@cepnw.com. 🌍



Gene Christian is the estate planning consultant for the Yearly Meeting Foundation.

A Testimonial:

Estate Planning at Church

Have you had Gene Christian present the estate planning materials at your church? Here's perspective from one of our pastors about her experience. Call Gene if you feel your congregation would benefit from similar support.

by Lorraine Watson, pastor, North Seattle Friends Church

Gene Christian was at North Seattle Friends on the 15th of November and did an excellent job talking about estate planning. He spoke in worship in place of the sermon and his presentation was very appropriate for worship.

My clerk agreed to have Gene and Brendon come to church that day and then told me about it. He never does that, so it was clear to me that Walt was particularly impacted by the communication from the YM about Gene and estate planning. I am pretty committed to saying yes to my people when they have a leading, so agreed to let Gene and Brendon come, and now I'm glad I did.

Gene really paid attention during the first part of worship which includes God stories and appropriately commented on a couple of things that were said earlier. There was a real sense that he was paying attention to what God was doing in worship. It felt genuine, not manipulative.

For his presentation he used a power point which he sent to me ahead of time. He really talked about our values and matching those values to how we distribute our resources when we die. The presentation was scripturally based and very practical. He told a number of stories. His whole presentation was consistent with what we know to be true. I was actually pleasantly surprised at how good it was.

The fact that I had a positive response from folks, including nine people signing up to meet with Gene on a return visit, tells me that others appreciated what he had to say. Just thought I would let you know about my experience. 🌱



GFU Mission:

A Week of Living Lightly

by Lynn Otto, George Fox University

For one week in October, George Fox University students and staff were challenged to live lightly. *Skip a Shower Day*, *Bring Your Own Mug Day*, and *A Day Unplugged* encouraged the university community to try some environmentally-friendly practices during its Week of Living Light. The event was sponsored by a sociology class taught by Professor Lisa McMinn (Newberg Friends).

“A Day Unplugged impacted my room-mates and me the most. We didn’t realize how many appliances we have plugged in that we don’t usually use.”

Brooke Schanzenbach, student

The class invited students and staff to pledge their participation in CO2 reduction events throughout the week. *Ride your Bike or Walk to School Day* saw fewer cars in campus lots. *Eat a Vegetarian Meal Day* raised awareness of the environmental impact of producing and transporting meat products.

Two of the week’s most active advocates were Jacob McDaniel (Klamath Falls, Ore.) and Kelsi Kimura (Richland Wash.). McDaniel said his reason for caring about carbon emissions is gratitude. “I think the appropriate response to creation is to be thankful for the beautiful gift God has given us,” he said. “Not caring about this issue shows a lack of appreciation or thankfulness.”

Kimura links caring for the earth with loving people.

“Making practical applications for a sustainable life-style is caring about future generations,” she said. “Environmental issues are about social justice, about starvation, drought, wars over resources, and natural disasters, about life and the quality of life for humanity.”

As the culmination event, George Fox community members met on the quad at 3:50 pm to form and photograph a giant 350, the number of carbon parts per million that allows for a sustainable environment. Emissions are currently at 385 parts per million. The photo was sent to 350.org to be displayed with thousands of similar photos from around the world, all taken on Nov. 24, the International Day of Climate Action. 🌍

For information on GFU’s “Creation Care Initiative” see georgefox.edu/green

Friends Leadership Program Update

by Jamie Johnson, Friends Leadership Program Director

The first semester of the Friends Leadership Program at George Fox University is nearing completion. The group has met every two weeks to deepen our relationships with each other and the Friends church, sharing the many ways we see the Lord working in our midst. We have explored what it means to be a Quaker, how we have seen people leading in our midst, and how we can be faithful to Christ as full-time students.

The students in the program are: Luke Pritchard, Cherry Grove; Spencer Ankeny and Elizabeth Rogers, Newberg; Jessica Burkholder, Sherwood; Emily Cropper, North Valley; Hannah Mills, and Alyssa Robert, Reedwood; Katie Morse, Star; and Rachel Clarkson, League City, Texas.



The next phase in the program, which will begin this spring, will be mentoring once a month with someone in either NWYM or the George Fox community.

This year first year Friends students received an average of \$22,000 in *non-loan* aid. This is compared to \$18,500 for all other first year students. We have already received a total of 27 applications from Friends students. I am encouraged, as you hopefully are, too!

In my role as a Friends student recruiter, I have had the privilege of meeting with Friends churches across the country. I have spent time this fall in Texas, Idaho, Philadelphia, Oregon and Washington, with plans to visit California and perhaps even Indiana and Ohio.

I have learned a lot about the communion of saints while teaching Sunday school, sharing meals, and entering into times of worship with each meeting I have visited. Every conversation I have gives me energy for continuing to connect with youth throughout NWYM and beyond. Each pastor, youthworker, parent, or student I have been able to connect with has been a reflection of just how rich the Friends Church is, wherever it is found. 🌍

Out of My Mind...

by Colin Saxton, NWYM Superintendent

As the calendar resets with another January my first act of the new year is to declare 2010 “The Year of Joy!” Please make a note of it.

Many, of course, hope 2010 will be “the year of economic recovery.” Most Friends in Boise believe 2010 is “the year of the Broncos” (that’s the Boise State football team, for us outsiders).

I’m sure countless other slogans have been given to 2010. With so many announcing what will and will not be the year’s focus, I decided to add my two cents. I will say it again: 2010 is “The Year of Joy.”

*Too often, the
faith life is more
an expression of
duty...than a
response rising
out of deep joy.*

As I learn to go deeper into Christ, joy is what I experience. Not giddy happiness. Not an absence from pain or elimination of real-world suffering. In fact, in terms of a sensitivity to *others’* suffering, it seems that the deeper one goes into the Christ life, the more one is aware of how much hurt and how much brokenness is in the world.

Joy is an altogether different animal, isn’t it? It may cause you to do all kinds of outlandish things. Consider the parable Jesus told in Matthew 13. In this story, a man out wandering in a field stumbles upon a treasure.

In a war-torn region where conquerors often buried their booty for safe-keeping, this man likely found a forgotten treasure trove. Apparently, the landowner did not know this treasure existed, or he would have gathered it up long ago. By law, our wandering hero could have laid claim to these goods.

Instead, the man sold everything he had to purchase the field where the treasure was buried. He did not even “borrow” a few of the gold coins or precious stones in advance to pay off the landowner. Instead, he went home and liquidated all of his assets to buy the land with the treasure.

What would move a person to do such a thing? *Joy.*

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then **in his joy** went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*

Whatever he found that day must have been amazing! Life-changing. He must have looked deeply enough into the treasure to realize it was worth far more than anything else he possessed.

Too often the faith life is more an expression of duty, obligation, fear of punishment or tradition, than a response rising out of deep joy. When this is the case the Christian witness we demonstrate and proclaim winds up looking awfully constrained, reserved and guarded. There is little sense of wild abandon about it, not much radical self-giving, only hints of the kind of extravagant grace we have experienced for ourselves in Christ.

But that sort of stingy, lifeless faith is not who we are. Not this year!

Instead, let's commit to look again at the treasure we have in Christ. And, instead of simply stumbling upon this grace...let us go deeper into Jesus and into his joy and be surprised anew at just how good God is and how blessed we are.

The Old Testament prophet *Ephaniah* gives a great image of joy. Picturing God restoring Israel after a hard season of discipline, he writes:

“Sing, O Daughter of Zion shout aloud, O Israel! The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” *Eph. 1:11a, 11b*

God sings over us for joy. But shouldn't it really be the other way around? Shouldn't we be singing over God for joy?

Friends, may we do more than *feel* joy this year. Let's *act* in joy. Let's *live* in joy. And most of all, let's *share* our joy with each other and with the world around us.

Happy New Year to each of you! May this be a season of deep joy, enduring peace and abundant fruitfulness for you and your loved ones. 🌱

Queries

- Where have you experienced the joy of life in Christ?
- What barriers to such joy do you face?
- How might joyful living transform NWYM?

Check out the “Connection” tab on our website to dialogue together on these challenging questions. We'd love to have you participate.



Colin Saxton is the NWYM Superintendent

