
Quaking Post

Baltimore Yearly Meeting RE Newsletter – FALL 2002

Adult RE: Re-Examining the Peace Testimony

By Chuck Fager

Are you familiar with this quote?

“We utterly deny . . . all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under an pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world. . . . The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.”

We ought to be familiar with it; after all, it’s in our *Faith & Practice* – and every other current Faith and Practice I’ve seen. Furthermore, it’s usually described as “THE Quaker Peace testimony,” of 1660. It’s fair to say that it’s become a kind of “Quaker scripture,” a canonical text for Friends.

But, Friends, there is in fact a lot more to the 1660 Peace testimony than this quote. For that matter, its two sentences don’t even go together, but are stitched together from different parts of the 1660 document

I’d like to suggest that the FULL text of this 1660 Declaration deserves our attention, and urge adult RE groups to make such an examination of the document a part of adult RE this year.

Such a study would not be simply a history lesson. No indeed! While the language of the 1660 statement is in many ways “antique,” the issues it addresses, and the challenges it poses to Friends, are as contemporary as this morning’s news.

It used to be hard to find this 1660 statement, which runs to about 3200 words in total. But no more. Today it’s available on the web, in several places. Perhaps the most convenient one for study is at:

<http://quaker.org/quest/1660-text.htm>

This version has two advantages: First, the text (which in the original runs on in a few extremely long paragraphs) is divided into “bite-size” sections (but all the text is there). And second, several sections are highlighted to bring out their special relevance.

continued on p.2 >>

Report from Mary Snyder upon visiting BYM Sessions

[Ed. Note: The BYM RE Committee invited Mary Snyder, a widely-known Quaker RE consultant, to be with us at BYM sessions this past summer, to work with adults and children on RE resources, issues and concerns. The following is her report on this visit.]

Dear Friends,

It is with gratitude that I write this report –gratitude to Baltimore Yearly Meeting Religious Education Committee for opening the opportunity to share what I feel the Lord has laid upon me.

One area in which I feel both trained and led is to entice Friends into a style of religious education that invites diversity. Racial diversity, yes, and more. Diversity of theology, diversity of ages, diversity of economic status. The list could go on and on with the bottom line of unity being the experience of a living God. We are called to live in love and respect of that which is deepest in one another and to speak (and live!) Truth as it is revealed to day by day. This is not easy and we need religious education that leads us into this life of faithfulness.

One way of experiencing such a life is through telling and entering stories. Another way is through play. Piaget said that, “Play is a child’s work.” Play is one way of becoming a part of the story. Other story responses include drama, art, writing, especially journaling in response to reading..

And so, during yearly meeting sessions, I tried to give Friends practices to take home. These were primarily in the form of exercises that encourage deep listening, letting go of self, aligning oneself with God’s will. I am continuing work on a home or small group study which encourages Friends to work with biblical and Quaker quotes using some form of *lexio divina* or divine reading. What I am hoping to do is to bring Friends back to a place of experience through reading and study.

And so, how did this high-flying philosophy play out with the various groups?

First, with junior yearly meeting staff, I returned to the basic teachings of Jesus as outlined in

continued on next page >>

Mary Snyder, cont.

Jesus, Who Was He? We read and moved to quotes about love and the kingdom.

When visiting rising 4th and 5th graders, we did a candle-making exercise based on Matthew 5:14 "You are light for all the world." I was quite moved as three boys and one girl found ways to affirm the light of their neighbor.

I also took a delightful walk in the arboretum with the K-1's. It was wonderful just to simply be in nature with the children and their teachers.

Attendance in the afternoon workshops and interest groups ranged from an interest group of one on Friday to eight on workshop days. It was very helpful to have Sarah Buchanan-Wollaston and Margo Lehman there to explain the ways in which Baltimore Yearly Meeting does things. In addition to the workshops, I met with five people for individual, prayerful consultations as well as talked with many folks over meals, etc.

It is my sense that we strengthen our monthly meetings by giving them the educational programs they need when they need them. I tried to listen to what various monthly meetings within Baltimore Yearly Meeting might need at this time.

One of the pieces which seems to be missing in many meetings is talking about our experiences of the Divine. In response to this need, I suggested the "God is Like" exercises from *Opening Doors to Quaker Religious Education*, several books that look like they were written for children, and *lectio divina* with various biblical and Quaker passages that deal with different views of God. The latter handout also included suggestions for bridge-building between those of a more eastern, usually Buddhist, outlook with the western, Christian outlook of more traditional Friends.

Some monthly meetings were concerned about recruitment of teachers as well as discernment of who might be willing and able to teach what. We responded with assurances that one learns and grows through teaching. And, best of all, teaching is fun!

Thank you again for the wonderful time with Friends at Baltimore Yearly Meeting Sessions. I felt lifted on wings of love and care.

Yours in the Light,
Mary Snyder
Wentworth, South Dakota

1660 Peace Testimony, cont.

Among these are passages that:

1. Detail the heart of the 1660 "Testimony (it's NOT in the familiar quotes);
2. Lay out the Quaker "Peace Plan" of 1660 –

one that is VERY different from almost every plan and campaign we hear about today; and

3. Two references to a well-known biblical passage (Romans 13:1-7) which adds a significant note of ambiguity not found in the sweeping character of the standard "Faith and Practice" quotes from it.

In short, there's plenty of food for thought and discussion in this foundational Quaker document. It could be a real aid to the kind of deep discernment that the times are calling Friends to do today, as we struggle to define and bear a faithful peace witness today.

REVIEWS – By Sarah Buchanan-Wollaston

Hope Through Heartsongs by Mattie J.T Stepanek (Hyperion, NY, 2002 - ISBN:0-7868-6944-5)

This collection of poems, written by a 13 year old boy with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, will surely inspire hope in your heart through both laughter and tears. This young author envisions himself as a peacemaker, with a self-imposed mission to share his belief in the power of hope. Mattie has the ability to see light and hope in individuals and the world. Read these poems and know that no matter how difficult some situations may seem, with hope comes light. Inspiring for all ages.

He has also published two New York Times bestsellers, *Heartsongs* and *Journey Through Heartsongs*.

A Quiet Place, by Douglas Wood. Illustrated by Dan Anderson. (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Children, NY, 2002 - ISBN: 0-689-81511-5)

It begins, "Sometimes a person needs a quiet place," and continues to poetically describe many of the places one might find it. Is your quiet place in the woods, by the sea, in the desert, in a cavern, or in a museum? The lovely, detailed illustrations give the reader a glimpse into the imagination of a young boy, as he seeks his quiet place. In conclusion the boy comes to find the best quiet place of all is, "...the one inside of you". This is an uncommonly beautiful book appropriate for all ages.

HARK! A Christmas Sampler, by Jane Yolen and Tomie dePaola. (G.P. Putnam' Sons, NY, 1991 ISBN:0-399-21853-X)

This collection of Christmas songs, stories, history, poems and short plays is a treasure trove of ideas for holiday celebrations. Well known children's author/ illustrators Yolen and dePaola combine their talents to create a burst of cheerful Christmas classics that will engage young children. They even include stories from around the world such as "The Spider's Christmas Tree", a

Ukrainian tale and , "The Greedy Woman" an Italian folk tale. These stories are appropriate for 2-12 year olds.

A First Day School lesson: "The Sheep Pen"

By Sarah Buchanan-Wollaston

Materials: Bibles, chart paper, markers, swatch of sheep's wool, plastic bugs, popsicle sticks.

Here is a FDS lesson we used at Deer Creek Friends Meeting last summer. It is one part in a series that is good for children aged 3-12. I adapted it from Hilliard Presbyterian Church, Hilliard OH.

A "sheep pen" is a creative approach to helping participants explore the meaning of Psalm 23.

The teacher acts as shepherd for the children (the sheep). The shepherd is planting the image, movement, and even the smell of the verse—as well as the cognitive understanding in the children's memory. The goal for the sheep pen lessons is for each child to have an exciting time becoming very familiar with the images and meanings of Psalm 23. As they grow older and remember it, Psalm 23 will, hopefully, continue to develop meaning in their lives.

The idea of Jesus, or God as a shepherd, or caretaker, for people can be a great comfort to people of all ages. Friends' interpretation of this may be that seeking truth and strength from that of God within ourselves helps us to live in accordance with the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity and equality.

Introduction: Have children gather. Pass around bibles (The New Revised Standard Version Bible wording is easy for children to understand). Remind children that the bible is a book full of stories, and poems. Today they will learn about one of the most loved poems – or psalms - of all times.

Have children find Psalm 23 in their bibles. Invite a volunteer to read the whole Psalm aloud from, "The Lord is my ", to, "my whole life long". Now, the teacher reads just the first 5 lines (stop at "for his name's sake") for clarity & a smooth flow of words. Now, tell the children you are going to focus on only the second line of the Psalm today.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures;"

Read the line aloud, and have the children repeat it with you 2-3 times. Ask the sheep if they have ever had measles, chicken pox, or mosquito bites that itch. How did it make them feel? (itchy, irritated, etc...) Relate the idea of bug bites being irritating to things people might do that are irritating.

Ask: What things do people do that bother you? (words, habits, sounds etc...). And then talk about how we can deal with irritating behavior (ask the person to stop, remove yourself from the room or situation, ask an adult for help, etc). You may want to list these things on chart paper.

Now, make sure everyone understands the word "pasture". Discuss (and list on chart paper, if you wish) what kind of image a "green pasture" would sound like, taste like, and feel like to a sheep. You may want them to close their eyes for a moment or two, to imagine being a sheep in a green pasture, before responding.

A Bit of Storytelling: Tell the story (in your own words):

Sheep are covered with wool that can be hot and scratchy. Pass around the swatch of sheep's wool, if you have it. The wool can get bugs and burrs in it and the sheep don't have arms to reach around and scratch themselves with. Sheep are very nervous animals. They will only lie down if they feel comfortable & safe. If the ground is comfortable and the shepherd is near, sheep feel safe. The shepherd will look for the sheep who seem to be having the most trouble settling down, and gently pull them aside to check their mouth, nose and wool for insects and sickness. The shepherd will use the rod to look through the wool and perhaps apply some medicine to the

sheep's nose to ease discomfort.

Now, make the connection between sheep & shepherds and God & people. Explain the Quaker belief that there is that of God within each of us. When people have troubles (when something irritates us) we need our inner strength (God) to help us with them, so that we will be able to respond to our troubles in a good (responsible, caring) way, and then relax and enjoy our lives. You may want to give an example of a time when you had a problem, and how you accessed God's support, acted to achieve a solution, then felt happier—more able to relax and move forward with other things.

Ask: Has there ever been a problem that you needed help in solving? Have you ever sought God's help (through prayer, talking to a trusted friend, etc...), found a solution, and finally, felt relieved, happier? Encourage children to share their experiences.

Activity: Play " Don't bug me!"

Hand out 1 plastic bug to each sheep. Invite them to lie down on their backs or stomachs on the rug. Have the sheep close their eyes for a minute while you briefly describe the scene...they are sheep laying on a lovely, soft, green pasture. The shepherd is nearby, so they feel safe. Describe the sounds, smells, & feel of the green pasture. Make sure there is space around each sheep – they will all be wiggling soon! Have the sheep open their eyes and pass out Popsicle sticks – 1 to each sheep.

Now ask the sheep to put their bugs inside of their clothing – on their stomachs or backs. Now, encourage each sheep to use their "rod"(popsicle stick) to wiggle the bugs out of their clothing, keeping the rod on the outside of their shirts. This simulates a bug trapped in the sheep's wool! If there is time & interest, give each sheep more bugs to wiggle out! Who can do it the fastest? Have fun & be safe!

After the wiggles have subsided, have the sheep sit in a circle to finish up with a brief closing activity. Repeat the 2nd line of Psalm 23, 2-3 times in unison. Then, ask the sheep to think of something that has been bothering them recently. Invite them to share their problem briefly by whispering it into your ear (the sheep asking the shepherd for help). You whisper back a few words of encouragement (I know you can solve this problem!, Who could you talk to about this?, Could God help you with this?, etc...), maybe give a hug, or pat on the back as well!

After the sheep share their problems with you, they may have snack!

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
He restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil for you are with me;
Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies,
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

INSIDE:

- **Reconsidering the Peace Testimony**
- **Book Reviews**
- **“The Sheep Pen” – A Lesson**
- **Using The Web As a RE Resource**

Using the Web as a RE Resource – I

By Josh Humphries, Roanoke Meeting

Well, things have been pretty busy recently, but I have managed to rustle up a few good websites that'll help you with various resources in R.E.

First, we'll start with good resources for comparative religion (my bread and butter). The best in my view is the **Internet Sacred Texts Archive**:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

They've got texts of every religion (or religious or even quasi-religious practice) from Alchemy to Zoroastrianism . . . gives great quotes you can blend together to produce a nice, well-rounded lesson that covers all the bases.

There's also an archive from the guys at **e.text**, one of the efforts to put books in electronic form, so they can be printed easily, or simply available with a keystroke:

<http://www.etext.org/Religious.Texts>

If your tastes are a little more on the Christian side of the spectrum here's a few Bibles:

<http://www.biblestudytools.net/>

<http://www.studylight.org/>

<http://www.bibles.net/>

All three have great search capabilities, and best of all have multiple versions for comparison.

Let's say you want to get links to some of the Early Christians . . . well here ya go: The Sacred Texts Archive

has a GREAT Christianity section:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/index.htm>

But, If all else fails you can search through this **Google Directory**:

http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christianity/Church_History/Early_Christian_Writings/

Of course, the same text is also part of the **Online Directory Project** at:

http://dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christianity/Church_History/Early_Christian_Writings/

In the next issue, we'll explore a little more Quaker-centric material and lesson plans and that sort of thing. But first, we'll explore searching the internet: Let's say you want to search Google for the exact quote from John Woolman on "the seeds of war": You would type in the following: **"Seeds of War" John Woolman**

The quotes denote that the specific phrase must be searched as if it were one complete word. Doing this prevents getting irrelevant information on sending seeds to other countries during war and things of that ilk (Oi Veh!). BUDDABING! There it is.

Or suppose you want to find something on a topic . . . say, the *Journal of John Woolman*...well, you can look it up on the **ODP (Open Directory project)** at <http://www.dmoz.org>

Once there, simply type John Woolman, and there on the second line you have it! There's also links to topics in the directory that'll have similar material.