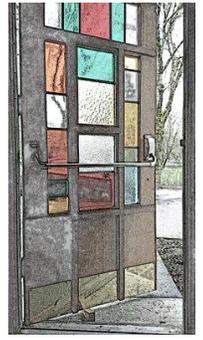


Thresholds

Opening Doorways to Connection, Clarity, and Transformation



West Hills Friends Church,
www.westhillsfriends.org,
503-246-7654

Events (at WHF unless stated otherwise)

October 4, 6-8 PM

High School Youth Group

October 5, 6-7:30

Newcomer Welcome, at Lucky Lab

October 7, 10 AM-4:30 PM+

Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends,
at Eugene Friends

October 8, after worship

Worship space rearrangement begins!

October 10, 9:30-11 AM

Toddler-Friendly Discussion Group, reading
T. Vail Palmer's book, **Face to Face: Early**

Quaker Encounters with the Bible

October 11, 6-8 PM

Middle School Youth Group

October 13, 6-9 PM

Portland Area Gathering of Friends, at
Clackamas Park Friends. Fellowship and fun.

October 14, 6 PM

Cello Concert, fundraiser for 2018 Bolivia
Medical Team

October 18, 6-8 PM

High School Youth Group

October 24, 9:30-11 AM

Toddler-Friendly Discussion Group

October 25, 6-8 PM

Middle School Youth Group

October 27, 7 PM

QVS Fall Fund-Raising Concert, Reedwood
Friends

November 1, 6-8 PM

High School Youth Group

November 18-19

Artisan Faire, fundraiser for Bolivia Team

Welcoming New People! October 5

We are creating some space for newcomers at WHF to gather and to ask questions, and get acquainted.

Who's a newcomer? Anyone who feels like one.

**We will meet on Thursday, October 5
at the Lucky Lab Public House in
Multnomah Village (7675 SW Capitol Hwy)
from 6-7:30 PM.**

Mark Pratt-Russum will be there to greet you.
See photo at right so you know who to look for!
(Mark is the one with the beard.)

Come prepared to ask some questions and meet new friends!



Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends

October 7 from 10-4:30 (dinner optional)

at Eugene Friends Church, 3495 W 18th St, Eugene

Everyone interested is welcome to attend! We will open with worship at 10, and the day will include business meetings, lunch, fun, and fellowship. Business meetings will end by 4:30, for those who want to start home, but there will be a shared evening meal for those who would like to continue talking. Childcare and programs for youth will be available.

Preliminary topics for business meeting:

- Action Item: Articles of Incorporation
- Action Item: Recording and licensing
- Task force to work on recommendations for a recording process going forward
- Update on by-laws
- Committee and working group reports
- Email etiquette
- Membership for individuals
- Membership for monthly meetings

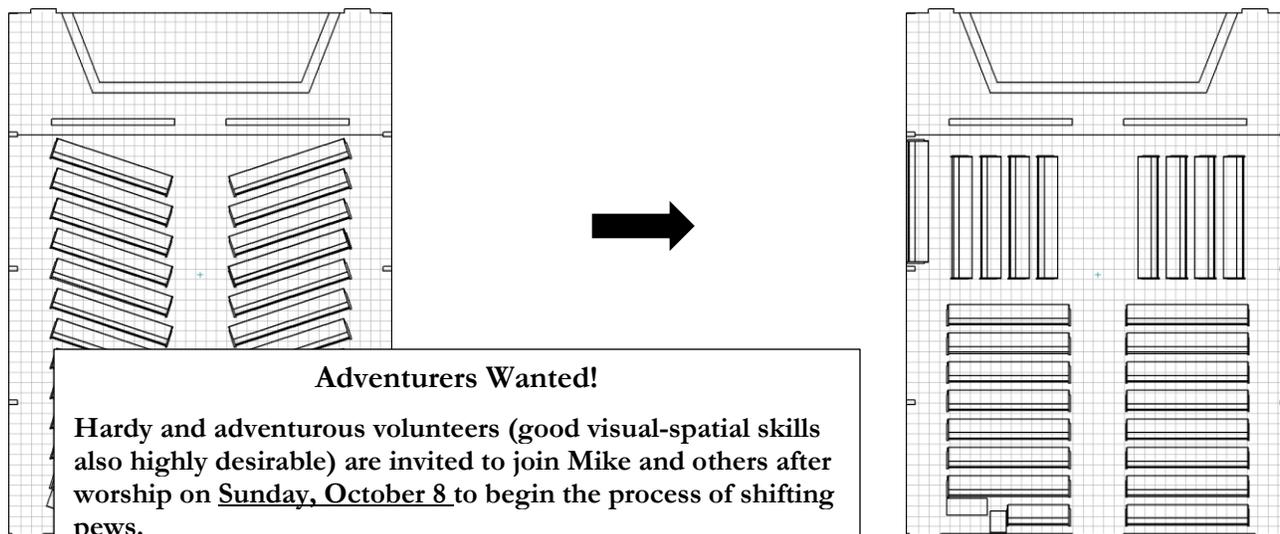
Contact Rachel Hampton – hamptonrachel2002@outlook.com – to let her know if you plan to attend. We especially need to know if you are bringing children and what ages, if you have any dietary restrictions we need to accommodate for meals.



Business Meeting OKs Meetinghouse Makeover

At the September 17 business meeting, the meeting reached agreement to authorize Mike and Stewards to rearrange the pews in the sanctuary based on the suggested plan (below). Realizing that the plan may evolve as things are actually moved, we authorized Mike et al to modify the layout as seems best at the time.

Our hope is to have our space more clearly express Quaker values and worship traditions. A secondary goal of the rearrangement is to make the sanctuary a more welcoming space for small group discussion. We acknowledged that many of us would like to see a more comprehensive redesign of the worship space, but decided as a group to take this step as a beginning rather than waiting until “someday” when we have the money to do the full transformation.



Adventurers Wanted!

Hardy and adventurous volunteers (good visual-spatial skills also highly desirable) are invited to join Mike and others after worship on Sunday, October 8 to begin the process of shifting pews.

Some will go spelunking into the crawlspace below the sanctuary, while others work from above. Wear clothes you can get grubby.

Those who wish to bring popcorn and be entertained are also cordially invited, Mike says.

Who's Who at West Hills Friends: Leaders, Committees, and Groups			
Pastor:	Mike Huber: mike-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org	Kitchen Coordinator:	Rachel Hampton
Pastor (Youth):	Mark Pratt-Russum: mark-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org	Music:	Jim Nail
Presiding Clerk:	Doreen Crail	Newsletter:	Mark Pratt-Russum
Recording Clerk:	Dover Norris-York	Nominating:	Margie Simmons
Treasurer:	Mitch Bixby	Pastoral Care:	Mike Huber
Elders:	Jayne Calkins, April Vanderwal, Jill Townley	Peace Concerns:	Kay Ellison
Ushers:	Mark Guenther	Retreat:	
Decorations:	Anne Anderson	Story Committee:	Sally Gillette
Directory:	Sally Gillette	Stewardship:	Mark Guenther
Earth Care:	Julie Peyton	Social:	Dover Norris-York
Hunger Concerns:	Dana Hawkins	Traveling Ministry:	Jan Seamans and Terri Beardsley

Ordinary and yet Utterly Changed: Reflections on the Eclipse

By Ruba Byrd

It was just before 10:18 on Monday morning, August 21 – a clear, not-too-hot morning. Derek and I and a few others were settled into our camp chairs in the Pioneer cemetery on a hill overlooking the Santiam River valley, ready for “the Eclipse.” Three weeks before, we had moved to a new town and discovered that our new little home was directly in the path of totality, where unnumbered thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) would be gathering. Well, that sure was good news – that we wouldn’t have to travel to another hemisphere, or continent, or country, or state, or even *town* for this astronomical wonder! I was glad I’d get to see it, but it wasn’t until about a week beforehand, when I read writer Annie Dillard’s 1982 essay, “Total Eclipse” (you can Google it) that I caught a sense of how surreal and mystical this experience might be.

And...it was. And yet...it wasn’t. The ordinary world was still the ordinary world. The trees stayed in their rooted places and waved their limbs in the breeze; the people around us didn’t melt, or explode, or scream (some of us gasped a little); the sky didn’t snow or hail – and yet everything seemed utterly changed, at first imperceptibly, and then suddenly, and oh so beautifully.

If you were in the path of the eclipse that morning, you might (yet might not) know what I’m trying to say. I’m still integrating the experience, but already I’m aware of how my perception of “light” has been altered. I’ve been traipsing along (and sometimes tripping over) the evangelical Quaker path for almost eight years now. As I seek to follow Christ in the Way of Friends, I am seeking, learning to open my whole self, all aspects of my life, to the pervasive and loving presence of God, described by many Friends through the centuries as the “Inward Light.”

Our perception of the sun, the source of life on Earth, changes imperceptibly and continuously as the time of day, the seasons, the weather, and our position on the globe change. We know what to expect from the sun at 10 in the morning, in August, in Oregon. Even when it’s obscured by clouds, the light gets through. It’s just always *there*.

And even after the moon’s shadow obscured the sun’s disk *almost completely* – the loss of light was barely noticeable. That was astounding – that just a bare sliver of sunlight is so intense that we’re still bathed in daylight. Not until the disk was completely covered did twilight descend on the world. And not until that moment was the startling, ethereal beauty of the sun’s corona revealed.

It’s hard to put in words, but as I remember how bright the day was when lit by the very smallest sliver of sun, I think, “Maybe those times when God seems so far away, when I’m afraid the Light is disappearing, there’s more than enough to see by. And in those times of total eclipse, I can turn my face upward to the beauty of the corona flaring out in the darkness and wait with hope and patience for the Light to return.”



Care Committees: Friends Journeying Together through Darkness

By Sarah Blanchard

[Editor's Note: This article is a brief excerpt from a powerful and deeply personal message Sarah delivered in meeting this summer. She was generous enough to give us permission to borrow from it for this issue of Thresholds. If you missed it, the whole message is available on SoundCloud, and it is well worth the time to listen all the way through.]

A care committee is a small group of 3-5 people who come together to support a person in our community in a more intimate way than is possible through our typical Sunday gatherings alone. We do this by listening and helping an individual to process and discern their own path with thoughtfulness, care, and love.

A committee can be requested for any number of reasons: a new job, an illness, loss of a loved one, changes in relationship status or living conditions, need for parenting support, mental health... You name it! More specifically, name it to Mike if you want help forming your own care group.

“Here’s the deal. The human soul doesn’t want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed — to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is. When we make that kind of deep bow to the soul of a suffering person, our respect reinforces the soul’s healing resources, the only resources that can help the sufferer make it through.” – Parker Palmer

Over the last 3 to 4 years I have had my very own small army of care warriors - forming groups of 3 to 5 witnesses who journeyed with me into the abyss of my deepest pain via gatherings on a monthly basis, for periods ranging from three months to a year in duration.

When I started my first committee, I did not know why I was there. I could not articulate precisely what I needed or why I had asked these people to so intimately join my inner circle.

I just knew that I was tired of everything — my whole world always spinning so fast with hardly a chance to breathe. I knew that I needed care. It was as if I was following a tiny ray of light into the darkness that was my soul. I knew that I couldn't do it alone. I needed community. I needed love.

As time marched on, I shared my story in bits and pieces. I cried. And I whispered. And sometimes I sat in silence, unable to speak for brief periods.

I felt loved and I felt lost and I confronted my fears. Fears of not being enough. Fears that if anyone really truly saw me, they would be disgusted and run in horror.

I did these things alone in my own private spaces over time. But more importantly, I did these things in community with others who could speak my strengths, flip my fears up on their heads, call BS on my self-deprecating lies, create boundaries for me to challenge and embrace, and ask deeply loving, caring questions. These are a few of the simple yet profound ways that my care committee members supported me in my journey to be exactly where I was each moment along the way, so that I could grow beyond my wildest expectations and learn to thrive.

I would like to say that the credit all goes to them but then I'd be forgetting an important lesson that they taught me — I was the one at the center, listening to my inner guide, following the light, and running the show. I was the one who dared to be brave, taking one small step at a time towards authentic community and love. I was the one who chose to face my fears of rejection and pain by staring others in the face and telling them my truth when it would've been easier to stay silent or walk away. And eventually my persistence won out. It's not always easy. There is still pain and fear and uncertainty and hardship. But I am learning how to embrace the journey with all of its tumultuous highs and lows. I am learning to exist. To be. To ask for what I need.

For me, this is spirituality. This is how we build community. This is the way forward. This process of each and every one of us coming together with our complete, most authentic selves, perhaps in small groups, at first shyly baring our souls until our souls are no longer shy. This process in which I have taken the time behind closed doors to communicate with others and to reflect deeply before speaking, truly seeking out my own answers about what I would share and why. And at the end of that process, standing here expecting and trusting each and every one of you to also show up with your whole selves Exactly as you are. Exactly where you are. To listen to my story and sit with my words. To sit with yourself and whatever this brings up for you and listen to your own inner guide. Us. Sitting in this room. Together. With similarities. And with differences. And still recognizing the value and the healing, restorative power of these moments when we come together and actually see each other. This is spirituality at its best! I won't always get it right. And neither will you. But we are still here. Holding each other. Together.

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends Weekly Bulletin, 9/29/2017

Discerning our Place in the Quaker Family

By Co-Clerk Cherice Bock

One of our tasks, as we continue the process of forming Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends, is to decide where we fit in the Quaker family. We have chosen to be a yearly meeting; will we be affiliated with a larger body?

The three larger bodies are: EFCI (Evangelical Friends Church International, with whom we were associated as Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Church), FUM (Friends United Meeting, a global fellowship of Christ-centered yearly meetings, associations, and worship groups), and FGC (Friends General Conference, a group of yearly meetings in the U.S. and Canada). Of these three, we probably fit best with FUM, with some important caveats and considerations. Together, we can weigh the pros and cons of affiliating with a larger body, and the ways in which we feel led to express our sense of who we are in Christ in relation to those with whom we disagree. In light of that, I will begin with a brief introduction to the organization of FUM, followed by concerns surrounding FUM's personnel policy, and important considerations for us to think about as we move forward in our mutual discernment regarding possible affiliation.

(Friends World Committee for Consultation [FWCC] is an international Friends organization that brings together Friends for relationship building and community, but which does not require decisions to be made together. Friends from all the umbrella organizations, or no umbrella organization, can be part of FWCC.)

FUM

Friends United Meeting (FUM) is an umbrella organization currently comprised of 34 Yearly Meetings and Associations (the New Association and the Western Association of the Religious Society of Friends [WARSF]). Of these, four of the North American YMs are dually-affiliated with Friends General Conference (Baltimore, New York, New England, and Canadian). The vast numeric majority of FUM (and Quakers in general) is non-North American. 20 FUM yearly meetings are from East Africa, and two are in the Caribbean (Cuba and Jamaica). There are also member worship groups in Belize, Palestine and Mexico. FUM is a global fellowship made up of mutually-supportive, equal members, rather than being a North American mission.

NWYM (called Oregon Yearly Meeting at the time) left FUM (Five Years Meeting at the time) in 1926, desiring a stronger focus on evangelism over social causes.

FUM's Personnel Policy

FUM has a personnel policy that contradicts the minute on inclusion of LGBTQ+ ministers we approved at annual sessions in July 2017. The policy includes the following:

FUM Policy on Personal Ethics

FUM's purpose is to extend the Body of Christ and to energize and equip the Religious Society of Friends to gather people into Christian fellowships. It is therefore imperative, both for the integrity of our programs and for the sake of our relationships with our constituency, that Friends United Meeting's employees evidence a Christian motivation and that they are members of the Society of Friends or have a sympathetic acquaintance with Friends.

Friends United Meeting holds to the traditional Friends testimonies of peace (nonviolence), simplicity, truth speaking, community, gender and racial equality, chastity, and fidelity in marriage. It is expected that the lifestyle of all staff and volunteer appointees of Friends United Meeting will be in accordance with these testimonies.

Friends United Meeting affirms the civil rights of all people. Staff and volunteer appointments and promotions are made without regard to sex, race, national origin, age, physical disability, or sexual orientation. It is expected however that intimate sexual behavior should be confined to traditional marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman.

(The Policy on Personal Ethics was approved by the General Board of Friends United Meeting, Minute 88-GB-52)

An additional minute, attached to this section in October 2012, reads:

The General Board did not find unity regarding the section on Personal Ethics in section 4, but acknowledged that the policy had been approved by the General Board in 1988 with minute 88-GB-52 and remained in effect.

While this policy directly contradicts our own position on LGBTQ+ people in ministry, there are a number of welcoming and affirming yearly meetings who remain affiliated with FUM, desiring to connect with the global community of Friends, and to continue to speak to other Friends on this topic. Some individual LGBTQ+ Friends in meetings such as Baltimore and New England have expressed their wish to stay with FUM for these reasons, laboring with FUM toward changing their policy.

For Our Discernment

The process of discerning our affiliation with the larger Friends community will likely be long, and we don't need to make a decision anytime soon. Here are some items to be aware of as we work through this process, as well as some queries for us to ponder as we think and pray around this topic.

- The Friends from the Western Association of the Religious Society of Friends (WARSF) who are thinking about joining SCYMF are affiliated with FUM.
- We don't know who is part of SCYMF yet, so we have a choice of making a decision about affiliating with a broader organization such as FUM and then seeing who wants to join "us," or waiting to see who wants to be part of "us" and then making a decision together about affiliation with other Friends groups.
- The personnel policy brings up competing justice considerations: LGBTQ+ ministry, and colonialism. The Western Church is just waking up to the destructive ways we've forced our culture and ideology on other cultures in the name of Jesus. As SCYMF, we presumably do not want to participate in coercive and controlling forms of Christianity. At the same time, we do not want to allow the imperialistic ideologies taught to other cultures by previous generations of our forbears to limit the ways that the Spirit can be at work in our denomination today.

Queries for Consideration:

- What is important to me about being part of something larger among Friends, and what concerns me about this idea?
- What is the line between humility and integrity?
- What is the role of US Friends in worldwide Friends conversations, and in the worldwide church?
- What is the role of the yearly meeting and any umbrella organizations we associate with in holding us accountable and providing authority?
- How do we hold ourselves accountable to the Spirit's leading while remaining open to the Spirit leading us in seemingly different directions?
- How do we trust one another and value one another's truths while also speaking prophetically from our own experience and discernment?
- If we don't feel clear to join with any of the existing Friends umbrella organizations, what might our responsibility be to facilitate something new among Friends more broadly?