

THE GAZETTE

"a news-sheet, a periodical publication giving an account of current events"

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

SEPTEMBER 2020



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Rufus Jones on the life and death of his son, from the final chapter of his book, *The Luminous Trail*, published in 1947, the year before his death:

"The boy I am writing about here . . . left me when he was only eleven years old The birth of this son in midwinter of 1892 was one of the supreme events of my life. He was named Lowell after my beloved poet. I took him in my arms from the doctor . . . and felt an unutterable emotion of joy and wonder I never got away from this divine miracle. There was light on this child's face which I did not put there. There were marks of heavenly origin too plain to miss. Poets admit that the child trails 'clouds of glory from God who is our home,' but they spoil it all by predicting that the glory will quickly 'fade into the light of common day.' It was not so with this child. A child looking at a beautiful object was told that it would soon be gone. "Never mind," he said, "there'll be something else beautiful tomorrow." The 'light' kept growing plainer and more real through the eleven years he lived here on earth with me. It never became 'common day.'"

Quoted in Douglas V. Steere (ed.), *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984, p.273.



Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

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Molly Cornell, recording clerk

Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Adult Discussion Group

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Peace and Social Order

2nd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Larry Jordan, convener

Growth and Learning

3rd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Sunny Davidson, convener

Empathy Practice (NVC)

Usually 1st Saturday 9:30–11:45

Brenda Nolan, convener

Restorative Circle Practice

Usually 1st Saturday 1:00-3:00

Brenda Nolan, convener

Ministry & Counsel

Deborah Bradley, convener

(508-564-4744)

Carolyne Jordan

Sunny Davidson

Larry Jordan

Jonathan Joyal

Abigail Young

**West Falmouth Meeting for Worship
with Attention to Business**

Usually 4th Sunday

(September 27, October 25)



Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Friends Decision Making: Active Participation, Clerking, and Recording -- Three consecutive **Wednesdays, September 23, 30, and October 7**, from 7:00 -- 8:30 p.m. Join Friends to develop skills in Quaker decision-making processes in our meetings and committees. This short series, via Zoom, will be interactive and will involve breakout discussions and practice scenarios as well as some short reading between sessions. The series is open to all. People who are currently clerks or recording clerks of meetings, committees, or other groups, as well as people who would like to become more active participants or leaders themselves are especially encouraged to attend. Four experienced New England clerks and recording clerks, Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock), Jeremiah Dickinson (Dover), Susan Davies (Vassalboro), and Peter Bishop (Northampton), will facilitate. Registration is limited and will close on September 16. See <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2020/09/friends-decision-making-active-participation-clerking-and-recording>.

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship is currently being held via Zoom. We particularly invite Friends from Yarmouth and East Sandwich to join us. An e-mail with the specifics on connecting to this

virtual format will be sent a day or so before. The Zoom meeting will open at 9:30 a.m. so that everyone has ample time to log in, get questions answered and greet one another. *Ministry & Council asks that, starting at 9:50, we enter the space quietly and begin to settle into worship. A designated Greeter will say a few words of welcome at 10 o'clock and again at the rise of worship after an hour has passed.* The "meeting room" will remain open for visiting until 11:30 a.m. Scheduled meetings, such as committee meetings, meeting for business and special programs, will begin at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Weekly Vespers will be held **Tuesdays** from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. as long as the weather permits. Friends will gather on the south side of the Meetinghouse, wearing face masks and bringing their own chairs. The Meetinghouse will be open only for access to the restroom. In case of rain, the gathering will be postponed until the following day.

Quaker Women – We are meeting weekly via Zoom on **Thursdays** at 7 p.m.

Memorial Meeting --



West Falmouth Friends were saddened to learn of the death on June 10th of our summer member, **Marilee Wheeler**. We will miss her quiet presence and lovely home and garden, where she hosted many a gathering of Friends over the years. A memorial meeting is planned for **August 31st** beginning at 4:30 p.m. It will be held outdoors on the meetinghouse grounds using the same COVID protocol as for Vespers.

Also of Interest

From Annual Sessions 2020 – Among the highlights of Friends first virtual Sessions were the plenary of Dr. Amanda Kemp and the Bible Half Hours offered by Cherice Bock. A slideshow, set to original music performed at the plenary, features artwork created as part of the plenary during an exercise on the power of imagination. See <https://neym.org/2020-sessions>. In addition, the Black Quaker Project hosted a conversation with Dr. Amanda Kemp and Dr. Harold Weaver, a "Dialogue on Survival." See <https://www.facebook.com/theblackquakerproject/videos/604474180253084/>.

Working Towards Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples: A Six-Part Webinar Series, Mondays, August 10, 24, September 14, 28 and October 12, and 26, from 7:30 -- 9:00 p.m. Co-sponsored by Canadian Friends Service Committee, Decolonizing Quakers, and Friends Peace Teams/Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples. Register for the entire series or for each webinar separately. Note that two of the six sessions have passed. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/working-towards-right-relationship-webinar-series/>.

Pendle Hill – Daily worship via Zoom from 8:30 – 9:10 a.m. See <https://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/>.

Pendle Hill -- Poetry Online Coffeehouse -- August 27, September 24 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. Listen to a different Featured Poet perform each month. Then, write in response to the Feature’s themes/words and share with other attendees of the program. This 1-hour poetry experience extends our community to a wider world and offers all writers a safe opportunity for linguistic exploration and spiritual discovery. Register or find more information at <https://pendlehill.org/events/poetry-coffeehouse-online-08-27-20/vvv>.

Weekly Taizé service. Thursday evenings in **September** (3, 10, 17, 24) **October** (1, 8, 15, 22, 29) and **November** (5, 12, 19, 26) at 7:00 p.m. This Zoom service will include recorded chants, spoken prayers and readings, and about twenty minutes of traditional Quaker silent waiting worship. See <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2020/09/weekly-taize-service-online>.



Friends Committee on National Legislation Virtual Events – Witness Wednesday Silent Reflection, 5 – 6:00 p.m. EDT

Wednesdays in **September (2, 9, 16, 23, 30)** and **October (7, 14, 21, 28)** at 5:15 p.m. Take a moment to reflect in keeping with the Quaker practice of silent worship. Join in virtually on Zoom or by phone for a period of shared reflection as we seek community in this time of isolation. See <https://act.fcni.org/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/search/>

Thursdays with Friends, 4 – 4:30 p.m. EDT:

September 3 – *The Rise of Guns During the Pandemic*. Register at: https://act.fcni.org/event/thursdays_with_friends_attend/1821/.

September 17 -- *The Resurrection of Landmines. Featuring special guest Ursula Knudsen-Latta, FCNL Legislative Representative for Peacebuilding*. Register at: https://act.fcni.org/event/thursdays_with_friends_attend/1822/.

October 1 -- *The State of Native America*. Featuring special guest Kerri Colfer, FCNL Congressional Advocate for Native American Policy. Register at: https://act.fcni.org/event/thursdays_with_friends_attend/1823/.

October 15 -- *Women, Children, and Peace in Afghanistan*. Featuring special guest Shukria Dellawar, FCNL's Legislative Associate for the Prevention of Violent Conflict and Coordinator of the Prevention and Protection Working Group. Register at: https://act.fcni.org/event/thursdays_with_friends_attend/1824/.

******* Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute 2020 -- November 14-17, 2020 *******

Be a part of Quaker advocacy that calls us to come together in Fierce Love as we work towards peace and justice. Join FCNL November 14-17, 2020 for the *Annual Meeting and the Quaker Public Policy Institute* online. In order to lobby while Congress is in session, this year’s Quaker Public Policy Institute will take place Monday, November 16 - Tuesday, November 17.

Quaker advocacy has never been more important. Be part of it this November! Registration required. For further information and to register, see <https://www.fcni.org/updates/annual-meeting-and-quaker-public-policy-institute-2020-27>.

American Friends Service Committee --

Some recent Blog posts on the AFSC website:

Pillsbury Boycott -- AFSC's Dalit Baum and Noam Perry write that Pillsbury, which is owned by General Mills, "manufactures frozen baked goods in an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian territory—violating international law and contributing to gross human rights abuses." See <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/were-boycotting-pillsbury>.



Immigrant rights and inclusive communities -- Members of Congress are at home in their districts for recess this month—a great opportunity to reach out to let them know what issues matter to you. Here are five tips to help you talk to your representatives about defunding ICE and CBP. See <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/5-tips-talking-your-congresspeople-about-defunding-ice-and-cbp>.

Black Lives Matter and Creating Inclusive Communities – Vonn New writes, "Racism is a white person problem, not a Black person problem. We as white people need to be talking to each other about it. So with that in mind, I feel led to share my personal guidelines and am open to any feedback." See <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/acting-in-faith/note-to-self-white-people-taking-part-blacklivesmatter-protests>.

"Civility Can Be Dangerous" -- In a recent *Friends Journal* article* Lucy Duncan, director of Friends Relations at American Friends Service Committee, writes, "Civility is no substitute for morality. Belief in peace doesn't mean naively expecting everyone to get along. Being quiet and polite is often all that's needed to perpetuate white supremacy." (p.18)

Duncan continues, "Confusing nonviolence with passivity is a huge mistake. Nonviolent communication should stop violence, not quietly reinforce it. Confronting oppression isn't violence; letting oppression progress is. Boycotts . . . are an active form of nonviolence. AFSC has taken stands to support economic resistance against oppression from apartheid in South Africa and occupied Palestine to the profiting of private prison and detention companies that feed mass incarceration and immigrant detention. Refusing to support systems of oppression economically is not warfare but active resistance to it." (p.19)

*"Civility Can Be Dangerous," *Friends Journal*, October 2018, pp.18-19.

Early Voting -- In Person or by Mail -- will be available for all 2020 elections.

By the time of this Gazette issue, early in-person voting and vote by mail application deadlines for the September 1 primary will have passed.



However, if you wish **to vote by mail** in the **November 3 Election** your application for a mail-in ballot must be received by the Town Clerk by **October 28**. To download a Vote by Mail application, see <http://www.falmouthmass.us/DocumentCenter/View/7412/Vote-By-Mail-Application>. If you do not have access to a printer, a hand written letter with your signature is acceptable as a Vote by Mail application.

Completed Vote by Mail applications may be:

- Hand delivered** to the drop box at Town Hall;
- Mailed** to the Town Clerk's Office: 59 Town Hall Square, Falmouth, MA 02540;
- Emailed** to TownClerk@falmouthma.gov; or
- Faxed** to 508-457-2511.

Completed Ballots may be:

- Mailed** using the postage pre-paid (white) envelope received with the ballot; or
- Hand delivered** to the "Town Hall Drop Box," the grey mail box on the left of the walkway to the main entrance to Town Hall.

Once your ballot has been returned to Town Hall, **your vote is final and you cannot take your ballot back or vote again.**

If you decide not to mail your ballot back, or your ballot doesn't reach Town Hall by Election Day, you can still vote in person at your polling place.

You can track your ballot at <http://www.TrackMyBallotMA.com>.



John Gates delivering his state primary ballot

News of Friends

The Jordans Celebrate Their 60th*

Carolyn and Larry met in 1956 during “Freshman Week” at Fisk University, she a newly arrived freshman music major from Augusta, GA, and he a senior physics major from a little town on the western piedmont of Virginia, Bedford, VA. After four years of long-distance courtship they were married in 1960 – one week after Carolyn’s graduation from Fisk – in a traditional Baptist ceremony in her home town.

Thirty years later, in 1990, the Jordans had settled in Memphis, TN, where Carolyn was then Dean of Academic Affairs at LeMoyne-Owen College, and Larry was an assistant professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. They decided on a long vacation trip to southeast Asia that included several days in Hawaii. It happened that on their anniversary that year, they found themselves worshipping in Honolulu Friends Meeting. They decided to rise and reaffirm their marriage. The meeting received their message warmly. Little did the Jordans know then that they were starting a tradition.



Carolyn and Larry in attendance at an annual Corporation Meeting of the AFSC in Philadelphia in 2015

Ten years later, in June of 2000, as members of the Memphis Friends Meeting of the Southern Appalachia Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA), they decided to do this again. This time they prepared a small certificate memorializing the occasion and had members of the meeting present to witness the event of their 40th anniversary.

The pattern now well established, when they found themselves in Washington, DC in 2010 they reserved the Washington Friends Meetinghouse – which happened to be just across the street from the residence of their daughter’s family with whom they were staying – for the occasion of the 50th anniversary, which came on a Thursday that year. The affair was well attended by family and friends from both the Jordan and Lamar sides, who traveled from as far away as New York and North Carolina. Again, a certificate was signed by all present.

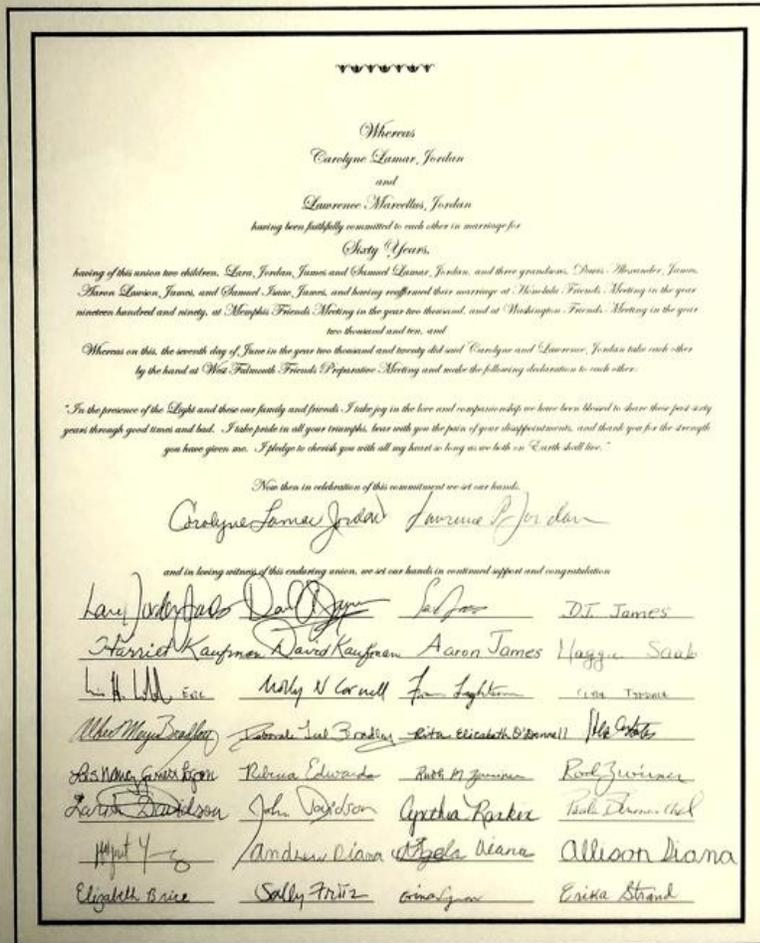
So, in June of this year, the COVID-19 pandemic having shut down our gatherings in the West Falmouth Meetinghouse, the Jordans asked the Clerk if they might rise for a special announcement at 10:45 during our online worship on Sunday, June 7. At that time, the children returned from the 1st Day School breakout room, and the Jordans spoke witness to their 60th wedding anniversary, which also has been memorialized in a certificate. The 2020 certificate is shown on the next page. All three certificates are proudly displayed on the walls of their home.

*Ed. Note: West Falmouth Friends were honored to witness Carolyn and Larry Jordan’s reaffirmation of their marriage vows on Sunday, June 7. In the following days, Friends who had attended the online worship signed the commemorative certificate. In this piece the Jordans share some of their story.

“Whereas Carolyn Lamar Jordan and Lawrence Marcellus Jordan having been faithfully committed to each other in marriage for Sixty Years,

having of this union two children, Lara Jordan James and Samuel Lamar Jordan, and three grandsons, Davis Alexander James, Aaron Lawson James, and Samuel Isaac James, and having reaffirmed their marriage at Honolulu Friends Meeting in the year nineteen hundred and ninety, at Memphis Friends Meeting in the year two thousand, and at Washington Friends Meeting in the year two thousand and ten, and

Whereas on this, the seventh day of June in the year two thousand and twenty did said Carolyn and Lawrence Jordan take each other by the hand at West Falmouth Friends Preparative Meeting and make the following declaration to each other:



'In the presence of the Light and these our family and friends I take joy in the love and companionship we have been blessed to share these past sixty years through good times and bad. I take pride in all your triumphs, bear with you the pain of your disappointments, and thank you for the strength you have given me. I pledge to cherish you with all my heart so long as we both on Earth shall live.'

Now then in celebration of this commitment we set our hands and in loving witness of this enduring union, we set our hands in continued support and congratulation.”

Readers Write

How to Write a Poem

Villanelle

First, write a line as clean as prose,
let it rhyme a little later;
the topic? only heaven knows

where it comes from where it goes,
that's up to you as the creator.
First write a line as clean as prose,

the meaning must stay marrow close,
like Brutus, Iago, any traitor.
The topic? Only heaven knows

how it seeds, though as it grows
beware of slick impersonators.
First write a line as clean as prose,

dark and crisp as Sunday clothes
to dress the grinning, prancing satyr,
the topic only heaven knows

how to address, and so it goes;
the rhymes arrive but much, much later.
First write a line as clean as prose,
the topic only heaven knows.

Eric H. Edwards



Special Section on Calls to Action

Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and Her Inhabitants

This year at Sessions, members of the Earthcare Ministry Committee and the Racial, Social & Economic Justice Committee joined together to produce and deliver a “Call to Urgent, Loving Action for the Earth and Her Inhabitants.” Members of our monthly meeting were key participants in this call, so we are reproducing the entire call here in the Gazette. Attendees at Sessions approved a minute “affirming the power in this message” and sending it to local meetings for their consideration. The printed version follows; the video version is available at <https://youtu.be/3kiXR6lyl88>.

Clerks’ Introduction to the Call to Action

Steve Gates, Gail Melix, Beth Morrill

Friends – I’m Steve Gates of Sandwich Monthly Meeting, which sits on the historical lands of the Wampanoag. As co-clerk of the Earthcare Ministry Committee, I am filled with joy because I can announce that The Earthcare Ministry Committee and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committee are bringing to Sessions this year a “Call to Urgent, Loving Action for The Earth and Her Inhabitants.”



Steve Gates

These two committees have worked together to respond to last year’s Virtual Plenary, in which Lisa Graustein laid out an amazing framework for thinking about how racism and the climate crisis both arise from the Doctrine of Discovery – in other words, from a set of ideas that have allowed our culture to enslave whole peoples and to destroy our planet. Her plenaries are still on the NEYM web site, and we encourage you to listen closely to them.

Our two committees are joining together to ask you to begin a year of discernment about these inter-related issues. We ask with humility, and yet with a great sense of urgency, that you consider our Call.

I’d like to introduce Gail Melix, co-clerk of Earthcare Ministry and a Wampanoag Quaker. Gail is the lead author of our Call. She will be followed by Beth Morrill, the clerk of Racial, Social & Economic Justice, and then by Friends from both committees reading the Call.



Gail Melix

Friends, it’s an honor to be here at Sessions among the wider Quaker Community. I am a member of Sandwich Monthly Meeting on Cape Cod. This Call to Action that you are about to hear arises, I believe, from Spirit-led discernment and a leading to address *all forms of injustice*, with the knowledge that they are related and intertwined.

The Call is a compilation of many NEYM Quaker voices. Although most of the text is contributed and read by members of RSEJ and EMC committees, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions of others from our Yearly Meeting.

We are asking that you to consider this Call as a way forward in discerning what action to take as an individual and a monthly meeting. We all understand that this is a difficult but necessary journey. But I want to reassure you that there will be *support for this effort*, including resource materials and direct support to monthly meetings in this journey.

We have found joy within this work. We celebrate the bonds that have been built between our committees. We are sustained in the knowledge that none of us is alone in our efforts. Our connection has broadened and deepened our individual knowledge and given us much needed strength and energy. We walk together with hope and invite others to walk beside us. Together we can do what we cannot do alone.

Let us take action together.



Beth Morrill

Call to Urgent, Loving Action for The Earth and Her Inhabitants

*From the Earthcare Ministry Committee and the Racial, Social & Economic Justice Committee
of the New England Yearly Meeting (Quakers)*

We urgently call New England Friends to enter into discernment of loving actions that we, our meetings, and our society can take to help remedy systemic problems of racism, social injustice, violence, greed, and failure to act on the climate crisis. These problems are inextricably bound together and our very existence here on Earth depends on our addressing them as such. This “Call to Action” is a collective, outward rallying cry for Friends to engage in God’s work to restore right relationship to the earth, to each other, and especially to those who have everywhere been traumatized, grief-stricken, and brutalized by the very nature of the culture we all inhabit.



Neil Blanchard

The roots of systemic injustice run deep in our minds, hearts and culture. At the core of these injustices is the belief that certain groups of people, by virtue of their race, nationality, religion or income, are entitled to amass wealth and to consume resources at the expense of the health, safety, and even the survival of all the others. This belief, dating at least to the Doctrine of Discovery,¹ is so firmly entrenched in our thinking that

¹ A full explanation of the impact of the Doctrine of Discovery can be found in Lisa Graustein’s Virtual Plenaries at <https://neym.org/recordings/news/invitation-2019-annual-sessions-plenary>.

we must begin by explicitly acknowledging it.



Kim Stoner

Many of us from New England who identify as white were brought up to believe in the superiority of our white, Western, Christian culture. We have looked with pride on our perceived advantages and have striven to “raise up” others but now we can more clearly see the consequences of putting ourselves over and above other human beings and other life forms: genocide of much of our Indigenous communities, and the confining to reservations, usually in abject poverty, of those who survived. The labor-intensive nature of our early economy and white Americans’ belief in their own worth led to the enslavement, first, of millions of Native Americans, and then, of Africans. These peoples and their descendants were subjected to forced labor, separation of families, rape, murder and other cruelties. To this day people of color face widespread health disparities, their work is undervalued and underpaid, and their schools are underfunded. Many have no chance of a better life.

Quakers must acknowledge that we are also complicit. As described in an Epistle from this year’s Pre-Gathering Retreat of Friends of Color and Their Families with FGC,² Quakers were reminded of the systemic racism experienced by Friends of Color in our Quaker communities. So, as we examine the systemic problems in America, we can start with ourselves and our own communities.

As a country the U.S. has believed in the importance of having an enormous, militarized police force to protect us from the perceived criminal intents of others. Many of us often hold simplistic views of people of color, including offensive stereotypes regarding their criminality. This has led to the over-policing of communities of color and the abuse and murder of Black Americans.

Americans believe we have benefitted from having a strong military. As a result, our government has continued to wage wars and to develop and refine weapons of mass destruction. We are the only nation to have used nuclear weapons against another people. We also continue to lead the world in making these weapons ever more “efficient.” Other nations have responded by developing their own weapons, to the point where we are now just “100 seconds to midnight” on the doomsday clock maintained by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.³

Our country has built a mighty industrial empire which creates and sells goods and services across the entire planet. But we now realize that among the effects of this industry are enormous amounts of waste: of our land, our air, our water, and almost every resource on the planet. Mother Earth gives us life, food, medicine, and wonder for our souls. And yet we receive these gifts not with gratitude but with disrespect and destruction.



Margaret Marshall

The human cost of our mighty industrial empire has been extraordinarily high, particularly in poor communities and communities of color, where disease, malnourishment and lead poisoning are much higher than elsewhere. Climate change disproportionately affects communities of color and the poor. The

² <https://www.fgcquaker.org/news/outgoing-epistle-2020-virtual-pre-gathering-friends-color-and-their-families>

³ <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>

consequences -- including drought, famine, catastrophic weather events, and wars arising from competition over scarce resources -- have led to an ever-growing refugee crisis. America has provided neither safety nor refuge to those fleeing the effects of climate change.

Americans need to acknowledge that the relatively comfortable lives of some of us have come, in large part, from our control of material resources including fossil fuels. Coal, oil, and gas have literally fueled our economic growth for over one hundred years. We have done enormous damage in order to keep that fuel supply going. The Earth continues to warm at an alarming rate, and we are now just ten years away from the point at which we can no longer avoid some of the most serious consequences of the global crisis unless we take immediate action. Species on our planet are disappearing at an alarming rate in what some call the "Sixth Mass Extinction."⁴

But there is hope. This seemingly inexhaustible list of problems on our Earth can make us fearful, angry, hopeless, depressed, or incapacitated. *But we need not follow that path.* We are being called instead to take the path that comes from love for others, and love of truth and justice.



Scott Rhodewalt

We strongly state that the Quaker testimony of Equality is universal and speaks to our need to love one another. We can no longer privilege one person, one group, one set of gender identities or sexual orientations, or one species above another and hope to survive. We can no longer ignore that the earth is dying. We can no longer tolerate any form of injustice toward one another or towards the earth.

We humbly ask Friends to join together in a year of faithful discernment and action, and to share with one another what we have been led to be and to do in a world that desperately needs faithful leadership guided by God's transforming, powerful love. Let us trust together in the God who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers in the field.

We especially ask you to follow the lead of people of color. It may help to begin with the Call to Action within *The Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and their Families*. In the Epistle, Friends are given six specific queries. Sit with these queries. Listen deeply. We ask White Friends to undertake the work needed to recognize their own assumptions so that they may truly "see" the Friends of color among us, respect their journeys and their struggles, stand with them, and let them breathe.



Diane Dicranian

⁴ Elizabeth Holbert, [The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History](#). New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2014.



Reb MacKenzie

Lord, we wait on your guidance. Open us to your will. Thank you for our many spiritual teachers throughout history. Let us be faithful to Your Teaching, Lord, as they were. Lead us to love one another, act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with You, and learn to live sustainably in peace. Let us discern together, whom you would have us be and what you would have us do.

Hence, Our Call

At this critical time, the Earthcare Ministry and the Racial, Social and Economic Justice Committees invite Friends to a year of spiritual and intellectual discernment regarding social injustice, including racism and the plight of Mother Earth. We ask you to answer this Call, to discern *actions* that can address the challenges of injustice. We further call upon meetings, after suitable discernment, to share with others in our Yearly Meeting the actions they have taken and to bring to 2021 Sessions minutes describing recommended actions for our Yearly Meeting to take.



Timmon Wallis

Let us take action together.

We understand that this is a large undertaking, but we call upon you to be part of NEYM’s Body of Action.

There is joy and strength in taking action together.

⁴⁴ *“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’*

⁴⁵ *He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’” (Matthew 25: 44-45)*

God, Creator, Inner Guide, Universal Source of Love, Spirit of Christ, please guide us in our spiritual discernment and in our actions. We join together as a community in that never-ending circle of seeking, and strive to be faithful to your guidance. We long to be ever open to your love.

Let us take action together.

A Blessing

New England Yearly Meeting Friends are in a 'specially precious time, a time when we have an opportunity as Quakers to live out what we believe: there is something of God in every human being and God does not discriminate.

But having worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and participated in some of the work that he has done, and thinking about his dream for America to love one another, I know that there is something of God in every human being and I deserve to be treated the same way you want to be treated and you want your children to be treated.

So this year as we are having New England Yearly Meeting let us make a commitment, a personal commitment, to ourselves that we will work and reach out with our hearts in all that we do to do away with racism and put white privilege out of our minds, out of sight and replace it with love. And let us live our religion as Quakers, let us live and love one another. Oh you'll get such a precious, loving feeling knowing that you're doing God's work and that you are making it possible for us to really live our religion as Quakers and make this a better world for all of us. And the time is now and if not you, who?

This thing called life is very short and it's precious so let us live it in loving ways.



James Varner



One other item of local interest prepared for, but not shown at Sessions because of insufficient time, is this very interesting video in which Gail Melix and Lewis Randa describe their Native Land Reparation project. See <https://youtu.be/vhbRs7hZyZI> or click on the image below.

Quakers Speak on Earthcare



Featuring Gail Melix and Lewis Randa of Sandwich Monthly Meeting talking about the Native Land Reparation Project



Earthcare Ministry Committee;
Racial, Social & Economic
Justice Committee



Call to Action from the Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and Their Families*

We ask all Quakers to heed a Call to Action. Please sit with these queries:



FGC
FRIENDS
GENERAL CONFERENCE

1. What is the Spirit leading me to do about the historic and ongoing racial pandemic across my meeting, my community, my work environment and my country.
2. How can we honor the memory of people who have lost their lives to the struggle for a better world?
3. How can we construct ways for people to engage and remain engaged beyond good intentions in the struggle for true equality in health, education, wealth and against state sanctioned violence?
4. How can we encourage the support of Friends of Color in Quaker worship and meetings around the world?
5. How can Friends de-center themselves in order to listen to and hear Friends of Color?
6. How can I support respite for Friends of Color?

In this time of COVID19, People of Color discovered that a deadly pandemic is secondary to the long-time pandemic of racism in our lives. People of Color are more likely to die from COVID19 due to the effects of racism and oppression. Think about how this pandemic has turned your world upside down, economically, emotionally, psychologically. Now imagine there is no one working on a vaccine, and that if you get sick or die, no one notices or cares. For People of Color, the human-made pandemic of racism is deadlier than COVID19, and we need you to do work so that we can BREATHE.

*The full epistle can be found at <https://www.fgcquaker.org/news/outgoing-epistle-2020-virtual-pre-gathering-friends-color-and-their-families>



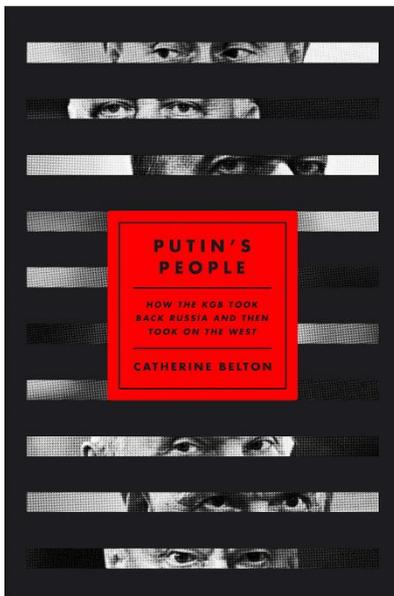
What We're Reading



John Davidson

***Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West* by Catherine Belton**

Catherine Belton, a journalist who worked in Moscow for many years as the correspondent of the *Financial Times*, has done an excellent job of explaining how Vladimir Putin and a small group of KGB men surrounding him rose to power and looted their country, while the West was slow to see what they had done and the danger they presented. The freewheeling generation of oligarchs of the Yeltsin era did not realize until it was too late that democracy would cease to exist, and that all wealth as well as political power would be centered on this small group who had combined gangster and intelligence skills with the ability to move under cover billions of dollars out of the country while hiding their methods of manipulation.



According to Belton, the Yeltsin extended family of officials and oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky were so concerned with preserving their wealth at the end of 1999 when Yeltsin retired as President that they turned over all power to Putin without correctly understanding his character, wrongly thinking he was a believer in democracy. Putin had developed over the course of his KGB career remarkable skills of dissimulation, convincing both Russians and Europeans that he had the best interests of the country in mind, while he moved to gain control of all the legal and economic power centers for himself and his loyalists. Just as the intellectuals on the Politburo surrounding Lenin during the 1920s had underestimated Stalin's determination to monopolize power, so the oligarchs at the end of the 1990s failed to see that Putin was playing a different, winner-take-all game which would bring their wealth as well as their liberty to an end.

In another book which I recently read, (also available at Falmouth Public Library), *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, the historian Soner Cagaptay explains the step by step process through which Erdogan outmaneuvered his rivals and seized control of political and legal power, then grabbed most media outlets as well as vast wealth. In both the cases of Putin and Erdogan, resentful power-oriented individuals from outside the established elite were underestimated by their rivals, failed to play by the expected or established rules, and managed to undermine democracy while seizing and

redistributing huge resources. In my opinion, all of this has relevance to America, as there is no guarantee that democracy will continue into the future in this country. One might argue that Donald J. Trump is a less disciplined, more self-indulgent type compared to Erdogan and Putin, but with personality characteristics similar to theirs in his megalomania, drive for power and psychopathic propensity to lie continually. Using extensive interviews with participants, Belton presents a convincing explanation for the failure of the West to see what Putin had done. There was vast money at stake in the early 2000s as the major international oil companies competed for pieces of Russian oil wealth, so Western governments and media sources were very slow to understand that their faith in democracy in Russia was misplaced, and that Putin had no respect for the West or the rule of law. In 2003 when Khodorkovsky (Russia's then richest man who had defied Putin) was arrested and his wealth confiscated following a show trial, Russia's political and economic course turned irrevocably away from a Western-led global integration, and a course of its own that was headed for collision with the West. Putin at that time made it clear to the oligarchs that they were not the actual owners of their businesses -- they were just holders whom he could replace.

A major conclusion of the book is that the techniques for infiltrating the West and buying influence which the KGB developed from the 1980s onward were used to interfere in the American presidential elections in 2016, and will continue to be used to support politicians such as Donald Trump whom the Russians find useful. The purchase of many multi-million dollar properties from Trump in the period after 2008 by a series of "retired" mafia and intelligence-linked Russians in an effort to pump up his image while saving him from bankruptcy and the willingness of Trump and his allies to cooperate with the Russian government's intelligence arm during the election show the way in which these techniques operate.

Recently the events in Belarus (large popular demonstrations against the dictator Lukashenko following his rigged re-election) and the demonstrations in Khabarovsk following the ouster by Putin of a popular elected governor have demonstrated the new challenges facing the Kremlin. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny's mysterious poisoning on 20 August probably shows the increasing paranoia of the regime which sees itself as encircled by enemies. Although Putin's KGB cronies may have been successful over the last twenty years in seizing almost all major sources of wealth in Russia and in closing off any alternative sources of information critical of the regime while simultaneously taking aggressive actions abroad, this pattern, so ably analyzed by Belton, may not be sustainable in the future. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the decline of democracy, whether in Russia, the United States or other countries.

Belton, C. *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.





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