

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

NOVEMBER 2021



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In the Company of Trees

In the company of trees,
I am both rooted and afloat.
With dappled sunlight shining, shimmering
from above me and below me,
Illuminating the canopy of Ms. Autumn's leaves.

Branches open wide like arms, but more than two.
The sigh of wind. A flirt of wings.
Leaves of brilliant colors, and green and brown
telling their stories, lessons
about life, and the tendering presence of aging.

Dying leaves compost, to support new life, and
herald the call to our interconnectedness,
our interwoven dependence, I wonder sometimes
if leaves are wagging a finger or waving in the wind?
Maybe both.

Kinship. The truth of unconstructed self
defines family. Sunlight reflects off a brook, nearby.
Mirroring the Light that's within us, and without us,
and inside all life on earth.
The breath of life is shared.

One earth. One home. One life.
In the witness of trees, attending to Spirit
becomes shared practice. I discover my Light
In the company of trees,
I love so much.

Gail Melix

Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

fran.lightsom@gmail.com)

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.

Erica Adams, 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

Cynthia Rankin, clerk

(508-360-7536)

Sunny Davidson, co-clerk

West Falmouth Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Usually 4th Sunday

(November 28, December 26)

Note: Due to COVID, many of these events are on hold. Check with committee conveners to be sure.

November Birthdays

Kim Allsup, 13

Rebecca Edwards, 30

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Beacon Hill Friends House – Simple Morning Meditation Practice

Held via Zoom **Monday through Friday** from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. The meditation is 15 minutes long, and begins and ends with a brief introduction to the practice. Orientation for newcomers begins at 8:00 a.m. and practice begins at 8:10. Join once or join regularly! The meditation is free and open to the public. See <https://bhfh.org/virtualprograms/simple-morning-meditation-practice-5/>.

Beacon Hill Friends House – Midweek Experiments in

Faithfulness – Held via Zoom **Wednesdays** from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

November 3: *Re-writing the Lyrics of Praise* with Jen Higgins-Newman; **November 10:** *Reflections on Creation* with Blaine Saito; **November 17:** *Praying the Occupation Without and the Monsters Within* with Derek Lamson. Learn more and register for particular programs at <https://bhfh.org/midweek/>.

Beacon Hill Friends House -- Drop-in Support for Addressing

Racial Justice Among Quakers -- Held via Zoom Wednesday, **November 3** from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. and Monday, **November 15** from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. LJ Boswell will facilitate these sessions. For further information and to register see <https://lu.ma/88cwug0i>.

Midweek Meditations Fall Series – Wednesdays, **November 17**

and **December 15** at 8:00 p.m. Brian Drayton (Souhegan, NH, Friends Meeting) is offering monthly mid-week opportunities for Zoom-based worship-sharing and conversation. Open to all, the opportunities are limited to 20 at a time. If we get full, a waiting list will be kept, in case a regular attender can't make it to a particular session. One week before the event, Friends will receive the Zoom link, and a short quotation from a Friend modern or ancient. Attenders will be asked to read the selection beforehand and reflect in private on a few short questions. Each gathering will open with quick greetings and a brief introduction to the quotation, followed by 15 minutes of conversation about the text. The rest of the time will be spent in worship-sharing. The aim is for the conversation to be slow, spacious, and centered. The final 5 minutes will be silent, before we depart from our miniature retreat. To register see <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2021/09/midweek-meditations-fall-series>.

Events in the Quarter

Work Party -- Sunday, **November 14** -- after worship at the New Bedford meeting. Lunch and fellowship provided. Additional work parties are scheduled for **December 12** and **January 9** (second Sundays).

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

Next Monthly Meeting for Business on Sunday, **December 3** via Zoom at 12:00 a.m. Yarmouth hosting.

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship continues to be held via Zoom at 10:00 a.m.

Quaker Women – Quaker Women are now gathering via Zoom twice a month, on the first Monday and the third Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. The dates for the coming month are Monday, **November 1** and Wednesday, **November 17**. Our Zoom gatherings begin with a brief check-in time followed by sharing on a given topic. The topic for **November 1** is “Stormy Weather” -- something you experienced, learned, or discovered during the recent storm or any other, or any metaphorical stormy weather that comes to mind. Contact is Abigail at asajyoung@gmail.com. An additional in-person gathering will be held at Atria outside, weather permitting, on Friday, **November 5** at 10 a.m.



Peace and Social Order –Sunday, **November 14** at 12:00 noon via Zoom. The guest presenter will be Susan Cozzens (Eastside Meeting, Bellevue, Washington). Her talk, “Reimagining Redmond,” will cover some of the history behind Redmond’s racial exclusivity as well as insights into what would be needed to transform this wealthy Seattle suburb into a place of racial justice. Register for the Zoom talk at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMrD-CtqTMsGdeQOd1Lxk6v4pAF2U9pQgLI> or livestream at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLcvmlRkcwwsDtLVT06TwQQ>.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting has traditionally supported the **Mashpee Wampanoag Food Pantry** in **December**. This is a major way we show how important the continued close relationship between the Meeting and the Tribe is to us. The proceeds from contributions of cash or checks (made out to "DYECH") are used to purchase Stop and Shop gift cards through the Dennis-Yarmouth Ecumenical Council for the Prevention of Homelessness. John Davidson is collecting checks at the meetinghouse at Sunday morning worship and David Young is accepting checks by mail and coordinating with Sandwich Monthly Meeting. Checks can be mailed to West Falmouth Friends, PO Box 720, West Falmouth, MA 02574.



Also of Interest



On Saturday, **November 6** from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., **First Congregational Church of Falmouth** will celebrate their recent installation of solar panels. The new system will be dedicated and Heather Goldstone (Woodwell Climate Research Center) and Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin (Southern New England UCC Conference) will be guest speakers. Free and open to the public. Masks required.

Regular Racial Justice Event

Every Sunday on the Falmouth Green from noon until nine and a half minutes after noon people join together to remember the work that remains to be done for racial justice in our country and in our neighborhoods. As the noon bell at First Congregational Church rings we stand quietly or kneel; some hold Black Lives Matter or other signs. Passing cars offer support. Passersby join in. At the end of the long 9½ minutes we may introduce ourselves to someone we haven't met or we might reconnect with friends. A gesture. A reminder. An invitation. **November 7, 14, 21 and 28** at 12:00 noon.



Photo credit: Nan Garrett-Logan, October 17, 2021.



As part of your Holiday Giving, consider shopping at the 2021 **Alternative Gift Market**. This year the Market is supporting twenty charitable organizations that are working to better lives locally and globally. Fully online this year because of COVID, shopping will be available from **November 12 – November 21**. You can preview the shopping list on **November 4**. Donations can be gifts honoring family members or friends or simply “gifts to the world.” West Falmouth Friends is a supporting congregation of the Alternative Gift Market. To learn more, see the flyer attached to this mailing or visit <http://www.alternativegiftmarketcapecod.org>.



Restorative Justice Education Series -- The Quaker practice of greeting that of God in others is reflected in a Restorative Justice practice known as Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD). An upcoming educational series offered by the Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ Restorative Justice Task Team (chaired by Brenda Nolan) begins on Thursday, **November 4** from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. The presenters will be Martina Lutz Schneider, the VOD Director at the Ahimsa Collective, who will speak about the concepts underlying this practice and Liz McNenny who will share the story of her Victim Offender Dialogue with the man who murdered her brother. Q & A will follow. Learn

more and register for this Zoom meeting at <https://www.sneucc.org/files/tables/content/15686460/files/Restorative+Justice+series.pdf>.

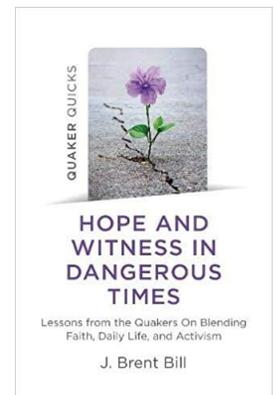


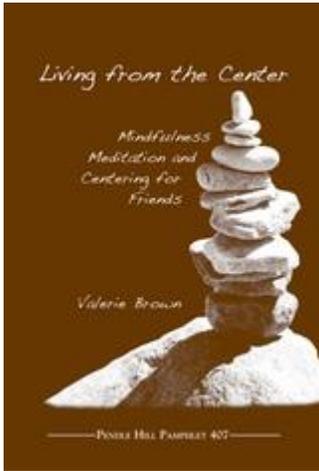
Don't forget to "fall behind" on **Sunday, November 7**. Enjoy that extra hour of sleep as **Daylight Savings Time** comes to an end!

Pendle Hill Events

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/>.

First Monday Lecture with Brent Bill -- *Hope and Witness in Dangerous Times* via Zoom Monday, **November 1** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Join Quaker author Bill Brent as he shares from his new book, *Hope and Witness in Dangerous Times: Lessons from Quakers on Blending Faith, Daily Life, and Activism*. Free to the public. Registration required. See <https://pendlehill.org/events/hope-and-witness-in-dangerous-times/>.





Online Reading Group –In November, the group will discuss Valerie Brown’s 2010 pamphlet, *Living from the Center: Mindfulness Meditation and Centering for Friends* (PHP #407). Wednesday, **November 10** from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Brian Wilcox, author of *An Ache for Union: Poems on Oneness with God through Love*, will be the guest host. For information on purchasing the pamphlet and registering for the discussion see <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-november-2/>.

Lecture series with John Dominic Crossan: *Jesus at Christmas: Story, Stone, Evolution*. Thursdays, **November 18, and December 2, 9, and 16** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. via Zoom. The basic fee for this four-week series is \$125. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/jesus-at-christmas-story-stone-evolution/>.

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Witness Wednesdays, Silent reflection, together in community from 5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Register at:

November 3 - <https://fcnl.actionkit.com/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2385/>.

November 10 - <https://fcnl.actionkit.com/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2386/>.

November 17 - <https://fcnl.actionkit.com/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2387/>.

November 24 - <https://fcnl.actionkit.com/event/witness-wednesday-virtual-events/2388/>.

Thursdays with Friends: Grassroots Impact in a time of Hyper-partisanship – November 4 from 4:00 – 4:30 p.m. Because our lawmakers are making decisions about people’s lives, we must be ready to work with them, regardless of party or agreement on all issues. FCNL meets both policymakers and advocates where they are and we seek opportunities to work together where there is common ground. Join Diane Randall for a conversation with Jim Cason, FCNL’s associate general secretary for strategic advocacy, on the impact grassroots advocates are making despite the deep political divisions in Congress. Register at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/thursdays-friends-grassroots-impact-time-hyper-partisanship>.

Grace in Generational Transition: Raising Up Young Adult Leaders. November 1 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. How can the Religious Society of Friends gracefully navigate generational transitions and work to raise up young adult leadership in our communities? What are the opportunities to live into worship and our lives with one another in new ways through these transitions? Diane Randall, outgoing general secretary of FCNL, will reflect on these queries in conversation with Nils Klinkenberg, executive director of Beacon Hill Friends House (BHFH). Register and learn more at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/grace-generational-transition-raising-young-adult-leaders>.

Virtual Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute 2021 -- Choose Hope. Work for Justice. -- November 17 – 21. For tentative schedule and to register see <https://www.fcnl.org/events/annualmeeting2021/schedule>.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting Report

Lee M. Hamilton, Clerk of the Quarter

Sandwich Quarter meets four times a year (January, April, July and October on the fourth Saturday at 10:00 a.m.) with the location of the host meeting rotating across the Quarter. The Quarter consists of these monthly meetings and their associated Preparative and Worship Groups: Allen's Neck, Dartmouth/Smith's Neck (Apponagansett Worship Group), Martha's Vineyard, Mattapoisett (Barnstable Friends Preparative), New Bedford, Sandwich Monthly (East Sandwich, West Falmouth, and Yarmouth Preparative Meetings), and Westport. The Nantucket Worship Group is under the care of the Quarter.

The Quarter also includes a Ministry and Council Committee currently co-clerked by Deana Chase (Westport Meeting) and Martha Mangelsdorf (New Bedford). This committee usually meets twice a year (March in East Sandwich and September in Mattapoisett).

Since the pandemic, meetings have been held virtually. We look forward to the day when we can meet face-to-face once again. In the past, attending SQ could be a daylong event including traveling to the host meeting, attending an hour of worship, followed by meeting for business, taking a break for lunch (often prepared by the host meeting with attenders contributing), and concluding with the host meeting facilitating a presentation or program. I have very fond memories of traveling to Quarterly Meetings with my dear Friend, Margaret Eastman, and sharing in fellowship with Friends from across the Quarter. I yearn for the return of these gatherings.

Toward the close of MFB on October 23, 2021, an interesting issue arose -- since the Nantucket Worship Group is under the care of SQ, which is not a monthly meeting and therefore does not hold membership, how do interested attenders apply for membership? With the meeting's approval, the Clerk of Martha's Vineyard will contact Nantucket Friends to explore the possibility of them becoming a preparative meeting under the care of MV and will report back at the next SQ meeting.

Even though we are meeting virtually, we continue to follow tradition and the Clerk of the host meeting is asked if they would like to present or facilitate a program at the close of MFB. Following the October 23 MFB, Deena Kinsky, Clerk of Mattapoisett, facilitated a very timely discussion on what is known about Afghan refugees being resettled in our region. We also learned that any home that refugees are placed in must meet certain criteria and pass an inspection. Some of what was discussed at the meeting (or learned since) follows.

- **Falmouth:** possibly three Afghan households (two couples and one family) may be resettled in our area. The Neighborhood Support Team of Cape Cod has applied for three housing placements through Ascentria Care Alliance. (Contact is Marga McElroy, NSTCapeCod@gmail.com.) Donations can be made through the team's GoFundMe page under Cape Cod NST (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/team-cape-cod-welcoming-afghan-evacuees>.) Checks can be made out to Waquoit Congregational Church and mailed to 15 Parsons Lane, East Falmouth, MA 02536. Note NST Cape Cod on the memo line. West Falmouth PM has already made a contribution to this fund. While NST is no longer gathering names of volunteers or material goods, those interested in receiving updates and being part of a cultural orientation on Zoom should ask to be added to the general email list.

- **Plymouth/Sandwich** area: an Iraqi family has been settled in Manomet (a village in Plymouth) and an Afghan family will be settled in Sandwich. Contact is Steve Schrader of POWIR, a group associated with Catholic Charities (Pigpenf16ma@gmail.com). At this point it is unclear whether additional families will be resettled in this area.
- **South Dartmouth** will host one Afghan family and a home has been found that can be available through June that has already passed inspection. While the Southcoast MA Neighborhood Support Team is comprised of the Shapiro Foundation and Ascentria with local community partners to help Afghan families resettle into their communities, Eric Dyson is the main contact and can be reached at erikdyson23@gmail.com. To donate, see the GoFundMe link: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/southcoast-ma-neighborhood-support-team-nst>.
Eric is also coordinating the following (if you are not able to sign in, contact Eric to be added as a participant). To *donate* things for homes, find a list of needed items at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4EABAB2BA5F58-nstapartment>.
To *volunteer* for listed jobs such as transportation or job support: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Qsnyp6Z2ggNuaOGaigQlnKDMqSx7iexEkNbWpSycl1k/edit#gid=894435378>.
- **New Bedford** area: up to five families will be arriving in the city. Mayor Jon Mitchell's Office is coordinating settlement plans. Resettlement services, including finding housing, will be coordinated by Helena DaSilva Hughes, President of the City's Immigrant Assistance Center (IAC), in partnership with the International Institute of New England (IINE) as the goal is to tap into close community connections to provide resources and wraparound services. (<https://immigrantsassistancecenter.org/contact/>; agency phone 508-996-8113). A IINE representative will work out of the IAC office in partnership with IAC staff. Although a donation through the IINE website goes to help the resettlement effort in their service areas of Boston, Lowell and Manchester NH, perhaps New Bedford could be noted as I believe this is a new endeavor for them (<https://iine.org/>).

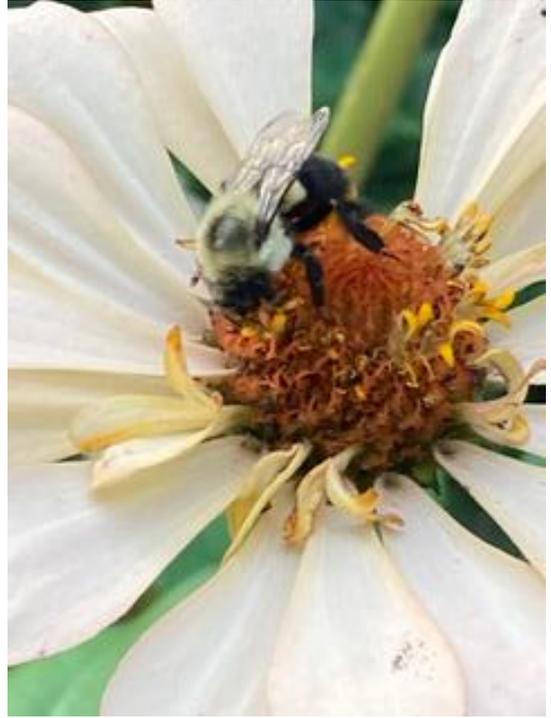
Participating in Sandwich Quarterly meetings and events continues to provide rewarding opportunities to join together with Friends and get to know each other as we continue to search for the seed within as we grow in our faith.



Readers' Photographs

October Bees by Gail Melix





Be sure to watch *My Garden of a Thousand Bees*, a wonderful PBS NOVA documentary. See it at <https://www.pbs.org/video/my-garden-of-a-thousand-bees-trjhzt/>.

Readers Write

Another Grandma Story

Alan Burt

This is my second Grandma Story for *The Gazette*. As I reviewed my first one in the January 2021 issue, there was one paragraph I felt compelled to expand upon for you, the readers, and for myself. My grandmother was the most influential person in my life. And although she died in 1983 at the age of 80, I continue to think about her lasting love for me. I remember so clearly sitting beside her bed at Cape Cod Hospital just before she died. In what follows, I will share her deathbed hopes and prayers for me, her parting gifts.

As I entered the room, once again, her loving smile greeted me. She had been concerned with my worrying about her failing health. She asked me to sit down next to her, and she held my hand and said, "Alan, it's time for me to die, and I'm okay with this. I have no regrets as I have lived a long and beautiful life. My life has not always been easy as I lived through a pandemic, two world wars, the Depression and the losses of loved ones along the way as well. However, I found a way to appreciate that all of this was a precious and personal gift from God. And the peace and completeness that I now feel comes from my being able to honestly say that I'm grateful for everyone and everything that has come my way." As she finished, she looked at me, smiling and nodded her head, urging me to smile and nod in agreement that it was time for her to die and that she had had a wonderful life.



Grandma at age 79. Photo credit: Alan Burt.

Grandma then shifted her focus and it felt very much like it was now on me. She said, "It took me a long time, but I can now honestly say that I don't have any ill feelings about anyone and to the best of my knowledge I don't think anyone has any ill feelings towards me." She paused, smiled at me again, and said "So I guess I've done pretty well with the gift of life that God has given me. And now, it's your turn to do the same." I asked her, "tell me how I can find the peace, joy, and fulfillment you have found." She said, "Like everyone else, I spent years of my life not feeling grateful enough to God or to others for the gifts in my life. I did this by holding on to hurts, resentments, judgments and accusations, along with my own sense of guilt and shame, none of which did me or anyone else any good."

"You make it sound so easy to simply forgive and forget all that has been bothering me about myself and others. In fact, as I realize now from our talk, I don't know anyone but you who has accomplished this simple, wise and seemingly impossible task." She smiled and said, "Keep working on it and make it the most important thing and, in time, it will be yours to share with others as I'm now sharing with you." I was thirty years old at the time of this life-changing talk with Grandma. Although I knew she was sharing something so wise, precious, and true, I was still a bit confused about how to find this for myself, let alone how to share it with others.

Grandma could always sense when I was troubled and she said, "Let me tell you a story that might help you to better understand what I'm trying to share with you. During the Depression I loaned a neighbor fifty dollars, which was a lot of money back then, with the agreement that she would pay me back five dollars a month. However, a number of months went by with no payments from her whatsoever. In addition, this neighbor who had been a very close and loving friend, was clearly avoiding me, which made me even more angry and resentful towards her. In fact, I became so angry and resentful I began telling others how she had wronged me. And although everyone validated my resentment, none of it made me feel any better.

So one day when I was so angry and just couldn't take it anymore, I decided to go to her house to confront and shame her. I walked up the steps to her house and knocked on the door. As she opened it and saw me, she lowered her head in shame. And although I had practiced the condescending remarks I was going to make, suddenly I was speechless and felt myself crumbling inside. I was truly lost and confused, having no idea what to say or do.

Then something unexpected, mysterious, and truly wonderful happened, as somehow the words I really needed to say, flowed out my mouth effortlessly." I said, "I've come to apologize to you." Hearing this, she lifted her head up with an expression of puzzlement and said, "What?" I repeated, "I've come to apologize for making the fifty dollars more important than my love for you. I don't want the fifty dollars anymore; I want us to be the loving friends we had always been."

"Truthfully Alan, I was as puzzled as she was. I believe to this day that it was God taking over, God speaking through me with the simple yet mighty healing power of love. We then fell into each other's arms and cried together; healed together."

I understood her story and felt the power of it, but still had questions. She smiled again and said, "The resentments toward others comes from our making the problems that arise between us more important than our love for each other. Husbands and wives stop speaking to each other and many divorces happen because of this as well. So many parents and children, along with brothers and sisters and even the best of friends come to resent and never speak to each other again. On and on, the same mistakes so many of us make because of our petty sense of pride and our justifications for resentments and hurting each other. There's not much more I can tell you," she said. "Remember that love beckons us to come closer to each other and resentments push us apart. So, learn as I did, by catching yourself when you succumb to the temptation to resent and hurt someone, and instead return to the lessons and the blessings of loving compassion."

"Why do we make this so hard is the real question and concern? I mean, it's so clearly written in the Scriptures: love God with all of your heart, mind and spirit and love others in the same way you love God and yourself. You're going to make mistakes, but keep holding onto loving as your traveling companion, and you'll be protected and guided each step of the way. And I'm not telling you that this is going to be easy, but it is the right, wise, and loving thing to do. In the end, if you stay the course, you'll then be sharing all of this with your loved ones when it's your time to leave this world."

My grandma died the next day, and I did not share what she and I had talked about as I felt it was something special for me alone. However, as I listened to others at the wake, the funeral and reception, I heard one story after another so similar to the special talk she had with me. My grandmother, who I always loved as this small, very simple, and loving lady in my life was actually a mighty force of God's Love

upon the earth. Like Jesus, she lived and died in such a meaningful and powerful way, that she never really left me at all.

Even now as I am writing this, I can sense that Grandma wants to finish this letter of love with her parting words to us. “Yes, you’re going to have to deal with difficult situations and relationships in your lives, but all you really need to do is to stop yourselves from making things worse. Whenever this happens, and it will happen, simply let go of your self-centered and self-serving ways and see what love can do. I think most of you already know how easy, wise, and amazing this is, as you’ve done this a number of times in your life. It is so important for us to never forget -- we are all the loving hands of God. This is what we were created for, and how we can work together to build the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. Amen.”

Grandma’s Grandson
Alan Burt



Steve and John Gates join Gina Lyman for some bulb planting.
Photo: R. O’Donnell, October 2021.

Two Poems

Eric H. Edwards

End Of Meeting

A soul is a stone
The ocean is the world
we are simply thrown...



Riff on Frost

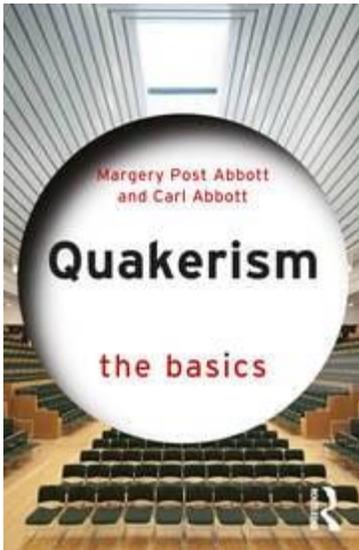
How do I start to get to here
when here from there seems far away,
a trembling needle points us near,
if not tomorrow then today.

If not tomorrow then today,
did you dress up for the light?
A little horse will shake and neigh
when snow and moon compete for night.

When snow and moon compete for night,
when horses hope for oats and stable
you'll look to find the house of light,
the darkness here that says you're able.

What We're Reading

David Ciscel: *Quakerism: The Basics*, by Margery Post Abbott and Carl Abbott.*



Every now and then a new book appears explaining the basics of the Religious Society of Friends. This is the newest and it is excellent. If you have joined Quakers as a convinced Friend, you might appreciate this up-to-date summary of the history, beliefs and eccentricities of modern-day Quakers. As the book explains, Quakerism was founded on a seventeenth century form of Christian enthusiasm or fundamentalism but with an inward focus. Many Quakers remain adherents of Christian beliefs but many liberal or unprogrammed Quakers – particularly in the United States – have moved on to a quietly spiritual form of Quakerism. This text explains how such divergent beliefs work together in denomination. From the beginning, Quakers rejected the catechism of beliefs of the established church. Neither the Bible nor the earthly princes of the church were seen as holding essential truths. Instead, each person could understand the calling of the Spirit as discerned through the Meeting of all Quakers. That spiritual equality of all peoples – Christian or not – continues today through the

many variants of the Religious Society of Friends. The Abbotts see the Peace Testimony as the other glue that unites modern Quakers. Quakers everywhere reject the use of lethal force to settle disputes – particularly wars between nations. And, over time, the Peace Testimony has focused on an active promotion of peace through diplomatic reconciliations. I could go on and on. The book provides many insights into our tradition. Do you know the reason we call ourselves a peculiar people? It is not because of our eccentricities. To be a peculiar people meant to be singled out as God's own people, people zealous for good deeds. The book is available at the FGC online bookstore (see <https://quakerbooks.org>).

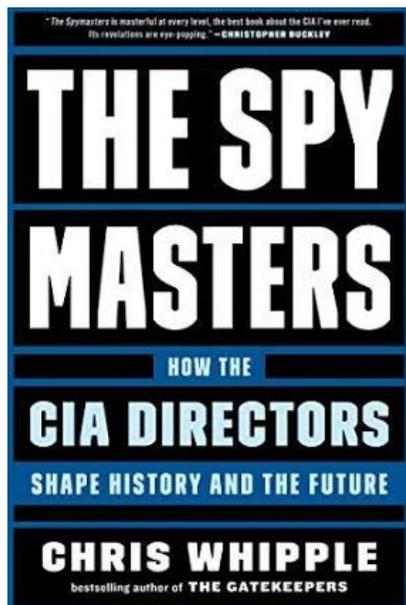
*This review first appeared in the October 2021 issue of *Memphis Friends News*.

Abbott, M.P and Abbott, C., *Quakerism: The Basics*. London, England: Routledge, 2021.

John Davidson: *The Spy Masters: How the CIA Directors Shape History and the Future*, by Chris Whipple.

The Central Intelligence Agency engages in intelligence gathering, spying, and covert action on every continent, and provides the U.S. President with what are supposed to be objective daily briefings as well as extensive research reports. At pivotal moments, the CIA has acted as a brake on rogue presidents, as for example when DCI (Director of Central Intelligence) Richard Helms in the 1970s refused to participate in Richard Nixon's criminality, or when a CIA whistleblower ignited impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump in 2019. Given the complexity of the CIA's tasks, from launching drone attacks on suspected terrorists in Pakistan to patrolling for threats in the Middle East involving nuclear proliferation or cyberwarfare, fully understanding the scope of agency operations is very difficult for outsiders. It is

really two organizations, the DI (Directorate of Intelligence) which analyzes intelligence information, and the DO (Directorate of Operations) which conducts spy missions.



Journalist Chris Whipple tries to pull back the curtain on the agency through interviews with past CIA directors, but faces the problem inevitable with such books-- the stories he has been told by those who held top-secret clearances are in some cases self-serving. For example, Whipple quotes at length from interviews with former CIA Director and Bush family favorite Robert Gates, but fails to notice how much of this information is self-serving political spin (p.147). However, many of the interviews are surprisingly frank, as for example a Former Acting Director of the CIA who told him that it used to be generally accepted that the U.S. was a force for good in the world, but after the decision was made to invade Iraq, that is not the case anymore (p.210).

By running quickly over seventy years of history, the author offers a good read, but many of us will remain unconvinced by the new evidence he uncovers through his interviews. For example, he discusses at length the way in which CIA Director George Tenet provided George W. Bush with a pretext for the invasion of Iraq through the provision of "evidence" from a highly questionable source that weapons of mass destruction were in Iraq, especially through the drafting of a flawed National Intelligence Estimate in 2002 (pp.201-205). Whipple concludes that "the evidence is overwhelming that with or without the CIA's flawed NIE, Bush and Cheney would have gone to war (p210)". He may well be right, but this brings us back to the question of whether an intelligence agency paid for within the military budget and under the supervision of the White House can provide an objective analysis when the Vice President interferes directly in the presentation of evidence, as Cheney did in the run-up to the Iraq war.

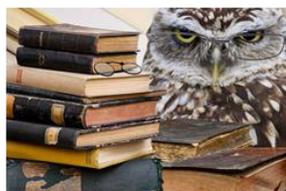
It is my opinion that the American military and its intelligence agencies made the same mistakes in all of the three major wars they have fought since 1960, in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States in each case associated itself very closely with corrupt governmental elites, attempted a counterinsurgency strategy which failed to understand the culture of the country in which they were fighting, killed a lot of people (often noncombatants) through hitting targets from the air with high explosives, and then wondered in the end why the population turned against them. The CIA, as an agency within the military budget completely under the control of the executive branch, has been heavily involved in fighting each of these wars while tasked with providing objective classified intelligence analyses, and has been in each case poorly placed to question the narrative of the military that U.S. strategy was leading to victory. Whipple provides an extensive discussion of the debate during the Vietnam War between the CIA and the Pentagon over the enemy "order of battle," or the estimate of enemy troop strength which the agency put at a half million and the army put at half that number (pp.36-38). Despite misgivings within the agency going up to the level of Director Helms, given its very deep role in the fighting in Vietnam through its conduct of the Phoenix Program, the agency was not able to raise questions. Similarly, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the decision was made to intervene without involvement or honest debate within the intelligence community, and questions were not raised later by the CIA. CIA Director General David Petraeus believed that by targeting enemies through drone strikes and carrying out a large-scale

deployment of troops we were winning in Afghanistan, just as he had won a “victory” in Iraq through the surge which he executed, and he ordered his analysts to argue this line, while the eventual failure of his plans in both countries raises very serious questions about objectivity.

I would ask why the agency played the same supporting role and made the same mistakes in each of these wars. Whipple collected a lot of interesting interviews, but failed to observe the politicization at the heart of the CIA mission: because the agency is paid for out of the military budget, its analysts are paid to back the Pentagon, and are in effect promoted and supervised as military officers, even if they do not wear uniforms in peacetime. He mentions senior Soviet expert and DI analyst Mel Goodman’s testimony against Robert Gates during the Congressional confirmation hearings of Gates to be Director, but mistakenly follows the line of Gates, who dishonestly presented the issue to him as a personality conflict (p.147). What Goodman and two supporting more junior DI Soviet analysts (John Davidson and Jennifer Glaudemans, not mentioned by Whipple) demonstrated in their testimony in 1991 was a systematic and widespread politicization of the intel product under Casey and Gates to exaggerate the Soviet threat, and a top-down failure to notice or discuss the many signs of impending Soviet collapse.

Despite the thousands of bright and well-qualified analysts who work within the CIA building, the organization as it was then and is now constituted is unable to question military strategy, let alone check the foreign policy assumptions of Presidents, because all of its written products are composed at the direction of the CIA Director and not only approved but edited by him, if he chooses to do so. Although some people discussed the possibility of breaking the intel budget out of the military budget after the cold war, this was never taken seriously within the Congress because it was understood that to get a fifty or sixty billion dollar “black budget” through Congress without questions each year it had to be a top-secret classified attachment to the annual military appropriations bill, as it has been ever since the 1950s. The vast bulk of this money is to support the spy satellites and other collection devices which the military considers essential for threat warning. The evidence provided by this highly technical system is something the military cares deeply about, while the information provided by relatively cheap spy operations or the expertise of analysts is considered comparatively unimportant. The freedom of speech of analysts or their legal rights are a trivial afterthought from the military perspective, and thus we are back to the same Catch-22 which has been in place for seventy years. The place of the CIA within the military budget puts intelligence officers in a position of knowledge, but denies them the ability to speak truth to power if they wish to have a career within the organization.

Whipple, C., *The Spy Masters: How the CIA Directors Shape History and the Future*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2020.





Wild Turkeys by Brenda Nolan (October 2018)

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Endpage photo: Gourds by
Steve Gates, October 2021.

G/gourds discuss whether it is even possible for them to “walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of gourd in every one.”*

*Attributed to George Faux.

