

# THE GAZETTE

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends **MARCH 2025**

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## ***From Aflame: Learning from Silence --***

“The sacred is not a sanctuary . . . it’s a force field. In many ways a forest fire. You can try controlled burns or back burning, you can walk towards the heat, but its power comes from the fact that it can’t begin to be controlled, or anticipated.”

Iyer, P. *Aflame: Learning from Silence*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2025, p. 159.

**Photos of  
Friends**



Guys in green collect seaweed at Old Silver Beach for Friendship Garden compost. Photo: R. O'Donnell, February 26, 2025.



Hundreds of residents braved the bitter cold to gather at Peg Noonan Park in downtown Falmouth on President's Day to protest Trump administration actions. The "We Choose to Fight" protest was hosted by Indivisible Upper Cape, Falmouth Immigrant Rights Coalition, the Coalition for Social Justice and other advocacy groups. Photo: S. Starkey, February 17, 2025.



Capital protest in Boston against Governor Healy's proposal to close the Cape and Islands Community Mental Health Center in Pocasset, MA and to impose significant cuts to the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. Photo: A. Burt, February 25, 2025.

## **QUAKER SABBATH**

“Oh that great Sabbath God,  
graunt me that Sabbath sight.”

*Edmund Spenser*

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
but it isn't a single day.

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
but it isn't a stop on the Way.

The Quakers have a sabbath  
that has no outward show.

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
that anyone can know.

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
that sits like a sun within;

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
that quiets the worldly din.

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
they use as part of their nurture;

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
that has no past nor future.

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
it's simply the present tense;

The Quakers have a sabbath,  
till there's no more sense in sense.

***Eric H. Edwards (2024)***

## **Special Section on Vocal Ministry**

### **My Take on Vocal Ministry**

Peggy Parker Fawcett

I would love to remember more about my experiences while attending Quaker Meeting as a child at Stony Run Friends Meeting in Baltimore, specifically when someone “spoke.” I do remember that they always stood up when giving vocal ministry and that sometimes people laughed. So, as a young child, it provided a welcome break in the silence when I, beside my siblings, was expected to adhere to my father’s whispered words, “no more talking, no more fun, Quaker meeting has begun.” (Wow, that could be a whole discussion in itself!).

Now, at 73, my experiences involved in the Quaker faith and feelings around vocal ministry specifically, are quite vivid. Since the mid-1970s I’ve attended mostly meetings within Sandwich Monthly Meeting which, of course, are unprogrammed. I have memories of spoken words that were inspirational, encouraging, helpful, loving, challenging, uplifting, and even funny. Like others, I have heard messages that seem to speak directly to my present situation, concern, or struggle. This is tremendously comforting. For me, it is also evidence of the core of our Quaker faith, the belief that *individuals* are capable of a personal, direct experience with God and that *communally* we can hear God’s voice through the spoken words of others. That is what vocal ministry is and should be.

What I feel vocal ministry should not be is a lecture, an announcement, a political diatribe, a history lesson, or a pre-planned talk or reading. Nor should it involve the sharing of personal woes unless perhaps this expresses a spiritual insight that may be valued by the communal body. It need not involve intellect nor engage ego. I feel that vocal ministry that is wordy and confusing is not helpful nor is it helpful if it is so long that listeners lose the gist of the message and may even feel that their precious, sacred time has been invaded. It is also important that subsequent messages, if any, do not become a conversation *between* speakers.

When we hear a message from God, prior to speaking, we should take a moment to consider whether we are being “nudged” to share this message because it

truly is for others. That is true vocal ministry – the spoken word of God delivered to others for contemplation, not words we exchange with each other. That is an activity for a discussion group outside of meeting for worship.

Finally, we need to recognize that “Speaking that is not true ministry can hinder or even derail the sense of a gathered meeting robbing those who are there for a spiritual experience and transformation.” This quote comes from *On Vocal Ministry* (p.8).\* I highly recommend this wonderful guide to help us discern whether we are “being used by the Spirit to minister to the meeting or [are instead] in the grip of a human desire to speak” (back cover).

I am so grateful to have embraced our Quaker faith and its practices. Vocal ministry is indeed a gift to all of us when we recognize that it is God nudging to come out from our inwardness to be heard.

\* B. Crossno and Bill, J. Brent. *On Vocal Ministry: Nurturing the Community through Listening and Faithfulness*. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications. Pendle Hill Pamphlet #460, December 2019.

## ***Speaking in Quaker Meeting***

*Fran Lightsom*

When I was new as a Friend, I was told that messages spoken during Quaker worship were understood to be relayed from God by the speaker. I was intimidated. I was not willing to stand up and make the claim that I was a prophet who spoke for God. An elder Friend cautioned me not to decide that I would never speak a message in worship. Then, one Sunday, a few words popped into my head with the strong feeling that they needed to be spoken and I was the one to speak them. Trembling, I stood and spoke. Across the room, an elder Friend smiled.

As I become more adept at listening to Spirit and attuning to the condition of my Quaker community, I speak in worship more often, but never lightly. Before I rise to speak, I consider whether the message has a Godly character: maybe comforting, maybe challenging, but always both loving and truthful. Is it a

message for others in the community, not just for me? If the meaning has come to me nonverbally, can I put it into words that will make sense to others? When I rise to speak, I bear in mind the admonition not to “outrun my guide” by elaborating with personal stories or opinions that draw attention to the messenger instead of the message.

In troubled times, I can arrive at worship too mixed up in my own troubles to be open to Spirit. Sometimes another Friend stands and speaks the message I need to hear, and I experience grace. At other times, when a Friend speaks a message that seems strange or inappropriate, I try to remember those times of grace and meditate on the gift that is our community: We gather to help each other encounter the comforting and challenging, yet loving, wisdom that is ineffable to human individuals.

### ***Thoughts on Vocal Ministry***

*A Member*

Many of us recognize that we are more cheered by meetings for worship in which someone speaks out of the silence than in one where we feel left to ourselves. But, when we think about it, our personal openness to the Spirit or its lack is the reason we are present, seeking with others. Anything made only of words can be gotten from a book.

Searching for God in a very quiet Quaker meeting on one's best day might produce no spoken words. I am not uncomfortable with that, but I know some are, especially some young people. Might there be one sentence given to me to break the silence? No, not yet.

I was just having something like a conversation with my Dear One, considering that God is Love. This conversation, I know, could be just my imagination, blundering along with humble requests. There is nothing out of that to be made public by way of vocal ministry.

Of course, I could say, as I would like to, "Where are You? Are You here, God? Are You surely my loving Father, as Jesus said?"

But who am I to proffer such a challenge? No wonder no answer came when I thought of asking it. What do I deserve? Did I ever come close to always loving God? No, not at all. If I question more, I will only feel lost.

Now my disappointment brings me closer to my fellow worshipers, some of whom may be feeling equally unworthy. I let the quest go until a more cheerful time.

If I feel like speaking it is because things seem too quiet. People want words, but I believe that most words in this valuable space are useless. Will not my words just intrude on their seeking? Oh well, if they are not just my words I can speak them.

Here, hear:

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength." How does one do that? By loving your neighbor as yourself.

Enough ministry.

## ***Reflections on Vocal Ministry***

*Alan Burt*

Over the years I have had the opportunity to review Quaker literature and to share with Friends about the meaning and the experience of vocal ministry. And, although there is a strong agreement that it is a deep, personal, and sacred ritual, there are diverse descriptions and opinions about it. Some of these I have found enlightening and expansive, others less so. However, there is always the opportunity to learn from diverse views on anything, and vocal ministry is no exception.

One of the most common things I hear from Quakers is how silent worship is a safe harbor for them. For many, sitting in the silence is what they love and need the most. For others, along with the importance of the silence, there is a need for sharing "that of God" and from hearing "that of God" from others.

Some feel it important to define vocal ministry with descriptive words and rules, others understand it more with indescribable feelings from the source of Spirit itself. I feel there is value to each of these approaches and am hopeful that we can become more accepting of each other's way to Spirit.

As I reflect on vocal ministry, I've found George Fox's insight that "We are called to be Children of Light and to walk in the Light and to speak that which comes to us inwardly from God" to be very helpful (cited in PHP #490, p. 22). In *Embracing Spiritual Gifts*, Adria Dicapua notes that "A knowledge of gifts will help us understand the reality that what I hear from God and what you hear from God may not be exactly the same. Nevertheless, we are all called to listen to each other and to love one another, to be patient with each other and to submit graciously to one another. We are all called to learn to say "no" to ourselves and "yes" to the love, joy and peace that God offers us in community. Only by coming together in love and humility can we live into the fullness of God's will and the goodness of the Peaceable Kingdom." (PHP #490, p. 22).

A Friend recently observed, "I love that of God in each of us." Regardless of whether we think in terms of Jesus, Spirit, or something else, this speaks to both our human and Divine forms of being. All of us need reminders that when in our human mode, we are, at times, judgmental and hurtful of others. However, when we find our way back to our Divine form, we are loving that of God in each other. Let us open our minds and hearts to the spirit of vocal ministry, to "that of God" in each of us.

### ***Some Thoughts on Vocal Ministry***

*Maggie Saab*

When I joined the Religious Society of Friends nineteen years ago, I was told that during worship you can stand up and share a thought that has inspired you and that no one is going to respond or judge you. That made me feel good, I felt free!

That one hour of worship is so inspiring for me. I am among dear friends who are thinking and concentrating on the right path to the Divine. We are different individuals with varying backgrounds, but we are united in seeking the Truth,

always seeking. Some are shy about speaking, but many times when I have shared a thought, others have come to tell me they were thinking the same thing.

Our ministry is not just in the meetinghouse. I believe we also have a great responsibility to share our message and thoughts, particularly with our younger generation. They seem to me to be lost in this chaotic world, feeling they cannot believe in God because they cannot see God. But we never see the wind, only the effects of the wind. Proselytizing, no, but we do have the responsibility to share our message with our grandkids, neighbors, acquaintances, and may be even the AA young people who use our meetinghouse every Friday. We need to encourage the younger generation (at their convenience) to know what we're about. This will take time, effort, and perseverance. As we age, we face the responsibility to share our message for a better and healthier generation in the future (and away from electronics for a while).



## **Readers Write**

### ***Reflections on the Recent Shut-Down of U.S.A.I.D.***

*John Davidson*

Having spent the last thirty years working on United States Agency for International Development (USAID) projects around the world, I was shocked and slightly depressed when it was announced in February that the organization which employed me ten times over this period as a project manager or research writer in a series of countries was being closed down by Elon Musk and Donald Trump. My initial shock has given way to anger and grief, especially for the millions of people who will die of starvation and disease as a result. The “humanitarian waivers” for life-or-death assistance discussed by Marco Rubio may slightly slow this process,<sup>1</sup> but the loss of tens of thousands of jobs held by local contractors and partners will undermine health care delivery as well as food availability for starving refugees on a massive scale.

Reviewing the work which USAID performed globally, it is obvious that no other organization will step in to replace the loss of nearly forty billion dollars, or forty percent of the world’s international development budget. USAID provided a billion dollars in assistance to the people of Gaza over the past year, in addition to keeping alive about 24 million refugees in Sudan. USAID provided technical assistance on economic development in more than one hundred countries, and supported pro-democracy programs in countries governed by dictatorships such as Hungary and Azerbaijan. Its humanitarian efforts provided more than a billion dollars of life-saving support to refugees in Ethiopia, along with an additional billion in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Afghanistan. Refugees from the war in Myanmar who relied on USAID for their medicines and health care now face death, a fact I find particularly disturbing having lived there for over a year in 2019, where I was employed by Europeaid to support the parliament.

<sup>1</sup> A new directive has put these exemptions on hold. See “Lifesaving aid remains halted worldwide despite Rubio’s promise.” By Karoun Demirjian, Michael Crowley, Edward Wong, New York Times, February 12, 2025.

Just a year ago, I went out to Tbilisi in Georgia on behalf of USAID to lead a series of seminars in support of a foreign investment project to help local lawyers and entrepreneurs. USAID in Tbilisi and across the former USSR has been in a continuing conflict with Russian disinformation, which has sought to denigrate American efforts to support democracy and economic development. Not surprisingly, Putin and his spokesmen have been delighted with the collapse of USAID, not least because 16 billion dollars in agency funding that was going to Ukraine just disappeared. Victor Orban repeatedly expressed his resentment against a pro-democracy USAID project in his country, undoubtedly a significant fact in the agency's demise, given his close personal connection to Trump's inner circle. Orban's Hungary has been repeatedly mentioned by Trump and his movement as a model for the hostile takeover of a democracy, so expect the Doge-purged tax authorities and the Patel-led FBI to engage in partisan investigations following the Hungarian model.

Out of the \$38 billion that USAID spent in fiscal year 2023, nearly \$20 billion was for health programs (such as those that combat malaria, tuberculosis, H.I.V./AIDS and infectious disease outbreaks) and humanitarian assistance to respond to emergencies and help stabilize war-torn regions. Other USAID investments were less visible but paid dividends in the longer term, such as giving girls a chance to get an education and enter the work force, or growing local economies through the provision of expert economic and legal assistance. The agency's abrupt undoing will cost many lives by creating huge gaps in public services, especially in health care, where USAID has poured much of its resources in recent years. In Kenya alone, at least 40,000 health care workers will lose their jobs, USAID officials said.<sup>2</sup> Several U.N. agencies that depend on American funding began to furlough part of their staff. The United States provided most of the funding for two large refugee camps in northern Kenya that house 700,000 people from at least 19 countries, and the loss of staff as well as funding can be expected to produce catastrophic results.

<sup>2</sup> See "We Are in Disbelief: Africa Reels as U.S. Aid Agency is Dismantled," by Declan Walsh, New York Times, February 8 and 12, 2025.

For over six decades, sub-Saharan Africa was a singular focus of American foreign aid. The continent received over \$8 billion a year, money that was used to feed starving children, supply lifesaving drugs and provide wartime humanitarian assistance. In a few short weeks, President Trump and the South African-born billionaire Elon Musk burned much of that work to the ground. Elon Musk concluded that the Congress would do nothing, so he and his team locked USAID senior technical officers out of their offices, preventing them from continuing to sign the orders and contracts necessary to keep hundreds of thousands of people employed around the world.<sup>3</sup> Reportedly Elon resents the fact that USAID projects created a public pressure campaign which undermined apartheid 30 to 35 years ago when he was a young man growing up there, and wants his revenge on this agency.

As the true scale of the fallout comes into view, African governments are wondering how to fill gaping holes left in vital services, like health care and education, that until February were funded by the United States. Aid groups and United Nations bodies that feed the starving or house refugees have seen their budgets slashed in half, or worse. By far the greatest price is being paid by ordinary Africans, millions of whom rely on American aid for their survival. But the consequences are also reverberating across an aid sector that, for better or worse, has been a pillar of Western engagement with Africa for over six decades.

The agency I have repeatedly worked for bears no resemblance to the “radical left” and “criminal” phantom that Mr. Trump says he destroyed. In addition to extensive oversight from Congress, USAID meticulously documented all of its programs and expenditures online. I did occasionally encounter waste, fraud and mismanagement during my career overseas, but most of that was with Europeaid rather than USAID. It is

<sup>3</sup> There have been lawsuits by both the employees of USAID and the contractors employed by the agency such as Chemonics and the American Bar Association, but federal judges are almost certainly unable to reopen a closed federal agency in my opinion. See “A judge freezes element of Trump’s plan to shut down U.S.A.I.D.” New York Times, February 7, 2025. See also “Foreign Aid Contractors Sue to Overturn Trump Administration’s U.S.A.I.D. order,” New York Times, Feb. 11, 2025, by Karoun Demirjian.

not a coincidence that one of the first acts of the men intent on killing the agency was to have the USAID website go dark.

## ***Inauguration Day 2025***

*Bill Holcombe*

A cold windy day dawned on January 20, 2025. I drove Trish Garland of East Sandwich Meeting up to Sherborn, MA. We had a great chance to get to know one another better. As we got further north and inland there was more snow until a few miles from the Peace Abbey around Dover a thick layer of nearly pristine snow covered everything. Being MLK Day Holiday, a sad irony indeed, kids were out sledding. Eventually we had to slow down as the roads were icy and somewhat challenging.

We arrived. A few other hardy souls joined us for our Grievance readings and protest of the incoming administration. We were cold. The icy wind stung our faces. My feet got cold.

Around forty or so people joined us, counting numerous police. Along with Lewis Randa and his wife Meg, Steve Gates of West Falmouth Meeting and Alan Burt reading on Homelessness made the trip and some old timers from Lewis's Life Experience School also joined us. The cold rendered Lewis's sound system inoperative, so twelve of us read our grievances as loudly as we could manage. A couple were locally famous for published works on capitalism and fascism, though I had not heard of them. Then carrying a symbolic chain we walked to a side street where most of us stood a while and then engaged in civil disobedience.

After our citations were issued via police taking our info on cell phones, some of us engaged the police in conversation. I had the good fortune to spend around 20 minutes with the Sherborn Chief, a good guy whose name I promptly forgot. He struck me as a very decent man with a tough road ahead in the next four years with ICE, immigration issues, and other potential legal conflicts of interest between the federal, state, and local governments. He sounded very sympathetic to our actions.

This coming Monday, March 3, a few of us oldsters with little to lose will plead guilty to Disturbing the Peace and try to secure a court trial date in order to plead a “Necessity Defense.”

Stay tuned for further updates.

## ***Inauguration Day -- A Statement of Resistance with the Peace Chain***

*Lewis Randa*

The first of our two scheduled hearings on the Inauguration Day Peace Chain Civil Disobedience Action wrapped up on February 24 with a dismissal, with each activist required to pay \$100 in court costs.

What began as a peaceful protest against the inauguration of Donald Trump on Martin Luther King Day of Service, uniting over 30 activists in front of the Gandhi statue in Sherborn, led to the issuance of court citations for disturbing the peace. During a preliminary hearing, these citations/charges quickly morphed into a legal barrier that prevented statements criticizing the rise of a twice-impeached, convicted felon now occupying the highest office in the land.

Ironically, the inaugural ceremony, which we protested from afar, took place in the very space in the U.S. Capitol that was invaded and ransacked four years ago by MAGA supporters seeking to undermine the democratic process.

The Natick District Court hearing conducted via Zoom ostensibly placed a gag order on voicing the absurdity of our current political landscape/predicament, reminding us that the fight for justice, decency, and



Peace Chain Civil Disobedience Action,

accountability is never ending.

On March 3, the remaining seven Peace Chain defendants, including my wife Meg and I, will be offered the opportunity either to accept a dismissal and pay the \$100 court costs, or to refuse and request a bench or jury trial. That decision has yet to be made.

For me, pursuing a trial represents either another blemish or another badge of honor (depending on your perspective). Regardless of a judge or jury verdict—innocent or guilty—this charge of disturbing, or “distributing” the peace will remain on our records well into the future. I see it as one of many forms of baptism into the resistance movement. More than anything, however, it’s about having skin in the game, which means making yourself available to experience the consequences of exercising your courage of conscience.

Rest assured, there is much more to come.



Friendship Gardens of Cape Cod, which began last year as a way of growing vegetables to help our food-insecure neighbors, is back for Season 2 with even more ways you can participate!

1) **Garden parties.** We will again be growing veggies in the Quaker House garden in back of the West Falmouth Meetinghouse. *Beginning on April 3*, we will meet every *Thursday* of the growing season at *5:00 p.m.* Come join us every (or any) Thursday. Please bring a potluck dish to share if you are able. For the first several weeks or until the temperature warms sufficiently, potluck will be inside the "children's shed." We'll start with food and conversation for 45 minutes or so, then "dig right in" to the gardening.

Friends have called these our "garden parties" because they provide a chance to have great conversations and do great things for our neighbors. You are welcome to come even if you just want to join us for the potluck. No gardening experience is necessary, but you will want to bring gardening gloves.

For the more cold-hardy friends, we will also be planting an initial crop of lettuce, radishes, onions, spinach, and peas in early March. I will be sending out an announcement of when we will do the planting, but I am targeting somewhere in the range March 5-12, depending upon the weather.

2) **Vegetables for FSS clients.** New this year, we will be directly partnering with the Falmouth Service Center in order to best help their clients. We'll be doing this at a table (I've labeled it the "Friendship Garden Pop-up") and tent near the front entrance to FSS each *Friday morning* during *April and May*. Last year, we simply delivered the vegetables to the Service Center for distribution by their volunteers. This year, we'll bring the vegetables we harvested the previous night to FSS, combine them with fresh produce donated by Farming Falmouth and others, and hand out the food directly to the clients. This will be a great opportunity for us to meet the neighbors we serve.

**3) Growing vegetables at their doorsteps.** As part of our partnership with FSS, we'll also be helping their clients to learn to grow fresh, organic vegetables right at their own doorsteps. We will be supplying everything that clients need to grow their own vegetables (see at right). This will enable them to grow microgreens, shoots and baby-leaf veggies indoors, or full-size veggies outdoors, as their interest and living conditions permit. We will encourage knowledgeable volunteers to also provide growing tips to those clients with little or no experience in growing veggies.

For both of the FSS activities, volunteers will meet at FSS *each Friday at 9:30 a.m.* We will be there a maximum of 2.5 hours (depending on how fast we give away all of the food!). If you'd be willing to participate in this pair of efforts, please email me so I can give you more details. We will be asking that volunteers commit to specific dates so we can ensure that we have enough volunteers every time.

**4) Gardening in East Sandwich.** E. Sandwich Meeting for Business has approved the formation of an ad hoc committee to consider how they could grow food to give away to food-insecure individuals. Trish Garland and Alan Burt have organized the first meeting of this committee for 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 2, in the Community Building at E. Sandwich meeting. The goal will be to have a proposal ready to present to their March Meeting for Business.



Microgreens



Baby leaf greens



Shoots

- In 2025, we will repeat the garden (but 3x more productive).
- We will also pilot the “fresh vegetables at your doorstep” portion of the project in partnership with Falmouth Service Center (food pantry).



Raised beds



Pots



LED-lighted etageres

Please come join us, whatever your gardening background, for the chance to make a real difference here on the Cape – and have fun while doing so!

*Friendship Gardens of Cape Cod is a project within The Peace Abbey, of which Friend Lewis Randa is the executive director. All of our volunteers are Quakers or*

*their family members. You can make a donation to the project by sending a check to The Peace Abbey, 8 Town Square, Plymouth, MA 02360, Pay to: The Peace Abbey Foundation, Memo line: "Friendship Gardens of Cape Cod."*

***Clerks\****

***Sandwich Monthly Meeting Francis Lightsom  
Sandwich Monthly Meeting Ministry and Counsel***

*Alan Burt*

***East Sandwich Preparative Meeting***

*Gail Melix and Barbara Goodman*

***West Falmouth Preparative Meeting***

*Molly Cornell*

***Yarmouth Preparative Meeting***

*Pat Harvey*

*\*Contact information can be found in the Sandwich  
Monthly Meeting Directory.*

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