

THE GAZETTE

Sandwich Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
FEBRUARY 2026

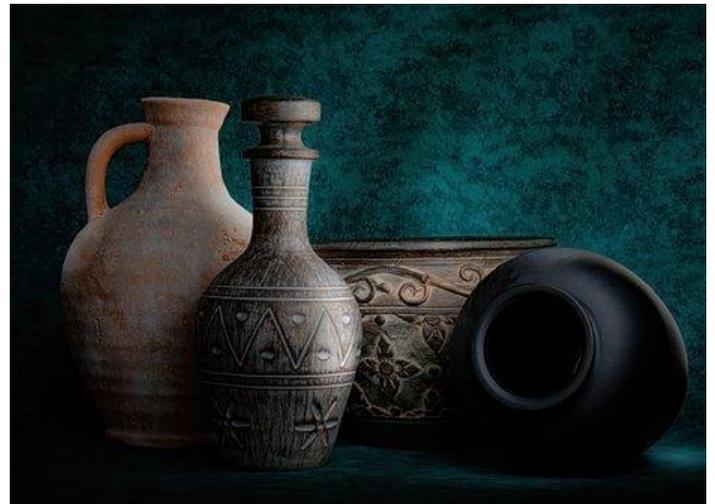
From Marge Piercy's "To Be of Use" (excerpt)

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

Piercy, M. "To Be of Use" in *Circles on the Water: The Selected Poems of Marge Piercy*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.

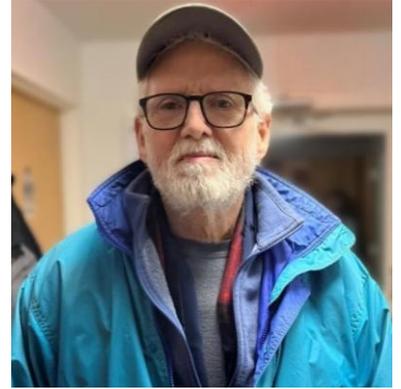
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Death of Kenneth Agin

Friends were deeply saddened to learn of Ken Agin's passing early on the morning of January 21 following a brief illness. A writer, artist, and stone mason, Ken also cared for two elderly gentlemen with disabilities in his home. He was devoted to the two, often referring to them as "my guys."



Ken was cared for during his illness by his devoted sister, Phyllis Agin, and his loving nephew, Jamie Agin. In addition to his sister, his nephew, and his guys, Ken leaves his many friends from East Sandwich Meeting and his beloved canine companion, Piper. Plans for a memorial gathering will be announced at a later date.



Quakers in the News

You'll want to read this very interesting article from *The Falmouth Enterprise* featuring gun reform activist and West Falmouth Quaker **Nan Garrett-Logan**. It begins "For some people, activism looks like marching in the streets, holding signs on the Village Green or testifying at the State House For Nan Garrett-Logan, it looks a little quieter. It looks like handmade greeting cards, soft washes of watercolor, carefully chosen literary quotes and ink made from melted-down AR-15 rifles." A terrific article by Lin Lin Hutchinson but, in all fairness, we have to say that Nan *also* marches in the streets, holds signs on the Village Green, and regularly shows up at State House offices. https://www.capenews.net/falmouth/news/ink-from-melted-down-firearms-powers-one-woman-s-quiet-push-for-gun-reform/article_904edfca-75a1-44c9-8f21-62b35e66ccde.html.

Steve Gates writes about what the Friendship Garden project has meant to him in "Joy at the Intersection of Earthcare, Gospel Ministry, and Community" in *BeFriending Creation*, a quarterly publication of Quaker Earthcare Witness. <https://quakerearthcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/3803-Final-For-Website.pdf>.

Photos

New Year's Eve dinner and worship at East Sandwich





Homeless Memorial gathering at East Sandwich, December 21, 2025, the longest night of the year. Following a potluck dinner, some Friends slept outside. See page 16 for reflections on this experience.



Sandwich Monthly Meeting for Business, Yarmouth, December 7, 2025



Special Section on Meditations on the New Year

Embracing the Darkness

Paul Denoncourt

When I was asked to contribute to this theme, my first impulse was to sit this one out. Like many Friends, given the present state of our nation and world, my angst for the coming year is significant. I do not want to add negativity to this conversation. But as I thought about it more, two realizations arose.

First, our nation has endured several great crises in its history, crises that rose to existential levels on the political, economic, and personal planes: the Civil War, the Great Depression, and two world wars, for example. The future looked dark at those times -- darker than now -- but we came through them. Although it will be painful, we will get through this.

Second, it is true that even the smallest of candles burns brightest in the dark. We Quakers use the metaphor of “The Light” to symbolize “That of God” within all people. Times of darkness are opportunities for each of us to channel that Light; to deliver divine Love into the world through acts of compassion, generosity, forgiveness, kindness, service, commitment, as well as participation in peaceful protests, boycotts, marches, and voting. In a way, we should embrace the darkness because it enhances our Light. It allows us to participate in Divinity expressing itself.



Photo by author, 2026.

Is My Commitment Growing?

Lewis Randa

In these unsettled times, it is not easy to know who we are called to be or what we are called to do. Friends speak of leadings and of following the Inner Light, yet much depends on how we pay attention to that quiet voice within. We often have some inward sense of our calling, but the culture around us encourages caution and fear, which can keep us from becoming the fuller, more faithful, risk-taking individuals we are meant to be in the face of repression.

Role models, elders, and trusted Friends help us see what might be possible. They reflect back to us, and reveal a larger, truer self beneath our hesitation. If we are most drawn to writers and teachers, our faithfulness may take the form of articles, letters, and other written ministry. If we are most stirred by public witness, we may find ourselves led toward civil disobedience or other visible forms of direct action. For some of us, taking part in a Peace Chain action, standing shoulder to shoulder, each of us holding a link of the chain in public prayer and witness, becomes a way of letting our lives speak together, our linked chains a visible sign of the bond of peace we long to see in the world.

For many of us, the path is a mix of words and action. Yet action is often where our words and good intentions are tested. Taking action can bring misunderstanding, friction, and sometimes legal consequences. To join a Peace Chain outside a courthouse, an ICE detention center, a military base, or a government office building, and then to stand before a judge and speak honestly from conscience (which is the goal), can itself be a powerful form of witness. In such moments, our bodies and our words together declare that another way is possible; this is the subtext of Peace Chain actions.* Such moments leave a record in the courts that someone cared enough to act and could not simply sit back, hoping things would somehow improve on their own. But such actions are not for everyone.

Friends know that prayer and action belong together. Prayer without action can become a distraction; action without waiting in the Light can become noisy and scattered. I have found that “embodying prayer through action” (being what you pray for), is the greatest form of empowerment. The Peace Chain can be one way

of bringing these together: a gathered, prayerful line of Friends and neighbors, listening inwardly to the Inner Light while outwardly taking a clear, nonviolent stand.**

In a time when many feel that democracy is being upended and authoritarianism has taken hold, the question is not only what we believe, but what we are ready to do in that Light. The challenge is to listen more deeply, remembering the courage of those who have gone before, and then take the next small, faithful step we are given.

For some Friends, a simple query has become a kind of touchstone over many years of peace witness: Is my faithful commitment growing or declining? Over the past half century of peace activism, this guiding question has helped measure that faithfulness: Am I doing more than I once did, or less, and if less, why, and if more, how am I being led into this deepening commitment?

However the answers come, they seldom provide an epiphany; instead, we are being led step by step, deeper into the Light, deeper into courage and self-sacrifice, and deeper into the hopeful, sacred work of peace to which that Light continues to call us.

In the end, the query is both simple and demanding: Is my commitment growing? And then there's that old adage that still rings in my ear: If not now, when? If not you, who?

*www.peaceabbey.org/peacechain-18-2/

**www.wickedlocal.com/picture-gallery/thepress/2017/01/20/inauguration-day-protest-in-sherborn/616227007/

See also www.plymouthindependent.org/your-view-peace-chain-march-represented-hope-and-resolve-in-face-of-ice-actions/.

Having Faith

Maggie Saab

Many years ago I was listening to my car radio when a church minister was sharing some of his thoughts. He was saying that if we have full faith in God, the Almighty, we will be made strong and fear will not control us. Meditating at the beginning of this year, I think of that same message. If I listen to my soul and to the Presence, I will not be alone, but will be guided by the Divine.

I cannot fight the big so-called political leaders. I can instill hope in myself and in my community to speak the truth and to do the right thing as much as I can. We should not let evil rule us. We need to fight it all the way by helping others in our communities, by praying, and by having faith.

What Does the Lord Ask of You?

Barbara Goodman

There is a passage from the book of Micah 6:8 that reads, "what does the Lord ask of you? This, and only this, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." My mornings are spent quietly and alone reflecting on how to do these three requests. This has been my practice for so many years I can't remember when I started... I ask for only two things: help me be grateful, help me to find You hidden in the moments of my day.

Meditations on the New Year

Ann Prentice

The year ends at the approach of the dead of winter. It's a time of enduring until the warmth returns. I am trying to survive the bleakness of the cold and the bleakness of our future. While hunkered down there is work to do: organize, plan, discard. I need to be ready for when Spring returns and when cruelty ends.

I have no idea on how to be or what to do. I can only try to listen and watch until it's revealed. Until then I will keep my inner light strong. I will also read history, tend the woodstove, plan the garden, make soup, laugh with and hug my friends and family, and walk in peace.

To Be of Use

Rita O'Donnell

In thinking about the New Year I have been asking myself what I might be called to be or to do in this time. There's been no answer. Recently, though, a poem and an image came. The poem is Marge Piercy's *To Be of Use*, an excerpt of which appears on the front page of this issue of *The Gazette*. Piercy is said to consider this one of her favorite poems and it is also one of mine, the last lines particularly:

“Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.”

The image that came is of the wall clock in the East Sandwich community building. The clock face is not visible, having been covered with a white paper plate bearing the word “Now.” When I first saw this I thought it was very amusing. It seems more serious now.

So, maybe the call is to be of use in this time which is now. This almost certainly refers to small, yet important, daily things – helping a neighbor, embracing a loved one, listening, encouraging, paying attention, now.

Hope. Courage. Action.

Molly Cornell

Hope. Courage. Action. These are words for the time we are in. I recently finished reading *Say It Well* by author, speechwriter, and Falmouth High School graduate, Terry Szuplat. His book is filled with inspiring examples of positive communication, drawn from his career as a foreign affairs speechwriter for Obama during the former President's two terms in office.

In one of his campaign speeches, Obama had this to say about hope: “. . . Hope is not blind optimism. It's not ignoring the enormity of the tasks ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. . . . Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it and to work for it.”

Obama's use of the phrase “that thing inside us that insists” stirred thoughts of the Quaker way of experiencing the Inner Light (by whatever expression) --- not that the Light “insists” in the sense of pushing or directing, but instead that it is simply always there. It is unconditional. The invitation that Way will open is constant. Our requirement is to be willing to wait, with an open heart, and listen, and be willing to change. And act! As Szuplat says in a follow-up, “Hope alone is not enough. Hope without action is indeed false hope.”

New Year Thoughts

Miriam Davidson

In this coming year, I hope to cultivate a sense of inner peace, joy and gratitude while I pray for people near and far who are suffering. I have a collection of books by the Dutch priest, Christian mystic, and disability advocate Henri Nouwen. I intend to read them all, as they provide comfort and awareness of the truth of God's love for me and the world. I also have a creative writing project I want to complete. Blessings to all.

When I was a teenager, my folks hosted Meeting for Worship in our home. Apparently, that made our house a safe sanctuary. One summer, we had indigenous visitors stay with us now and then. My parents wisely didn't tell us what was going on and it wasn't until I was well into adulthood that I figured out we were offering a safe place for leaders of the American Indian Movement. The folks who visited were different from us in just about any way one could imagine. Thinking about that reminded me, on Martin Luther King Day, of a quote attributed to Dr. King. He said, "People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other."*

As I contemplated this, I remembered one Lakota couple who stayed with us for a few days. Every morning, they awoke before dawn and built a small fire in our backyard. I could hear something that sounded like whispered chanting. On the last day they were with us, my curiosity got the better of me, so I got up while it was still dark (a major deal when I was a teen!) and joined them. I sat quietly, not wanting to intrude but after the sun was up they both smiled and asked what I thought. I was deeply moved and responded with my own questions about what they were doing and what the ritual meant. They told me that they lit a fire to greet the sun and to gain focus for the day. They said it was their way of honoring the Great Spirit. Their faith was different from mine, but I have never felt the sacred more deeply than that morning.

Looking back on it, I suspect they were on the run but took the time to worship in their manner. This taught me the value of taking time to focus and worship, regardless of the circumstances and the value of simply waiting on the "light" or

dawn if you will. I learned that for me anyway, the real importance of civil rights is not about morality or ethics or law, even though those things are important. But I learned that civil rights are about acknowledging and enjoying “that of God in all people” as George Fox put it. When we remove those who are different from our circle, when we relegate them to the back of the bus, or drag them out of their homes because they have an accent or different color, we not only harm them, but we rob ourselves of experiencing what they have to offer. Folks from different cultures and different races bring us a perspective we would miss if we lived in a monochrome society.

In 2026, I will dedicate myself to opening my heart and soul to people who have lives, cultures, and backgrounds that are different from mine. Not just because it’s the right thing to do but because of what they have to offer me in my journey. “Advice for Living,” *Ebony*, May 1958, p.111.



Then & Now

Now & Then

Then & Now

1968

What a Year it were.

Assassinations.

Viet Nam escalations.

Nixon elect sun fails to shine 43 straight days Ithaca, NY.

Riots in streets on campuses in our minds.

Underground railroad slum housing young men in flight to Canada.

Campus closes 3 Spring semesters. Teach-ins thousands cavernous Barton Hall.

Daniel Berrigan Fugitive arrives motorcycle wild reception peaceful love burst.

Millions in DC streets NYC streets. Not the hundred thousand per NY Times—police verify to us: Millions. Wild chaotic energy opposing Death rain special delivery US Gov't on brown people in huts.

Opposing the Death Machine.

O to have that young body energy now.

2016

Dread.

Unreality—how can this happen again? This time those with weapons tote portable machine guns. Those “worst filled with passionate intensity” enjoy full unflinching support US Federal 3 Branches.

Overriding commonality: heaven help those who don't play ball. And heaven help our brown people. Violence to a 1st Amended citizenry.

Rule by An American Invention with the Bombast of Muhammad Ali, in charge of, to quote him:

Everything.

Lacking Ali's generosity, kindness, the twinkle in his eye . . .

Such a wretched first month not yet in burning books.

Stay tuned Good People.

CODA I

What do we hear of Global Peril? these days
of mass extinctions?
of ocean death?
of good news other countries & peoples stepping up & out?

Not very Darn much—2026 a Year soaked in fear & cowardice

2025 poisoned our airways our social contracts
the old pockets of courage resistance care for plants animals
water
heard & seen by too few.

CODA II

A good friend has died
we diminished in his death
reminded this brief life
of compassion for all living beings.

Bill Holcombe January 2026

Readers Write

Epiphany

Ken Brynildsen

The town dump isn't a place where one expects to experience an epiphany. But that's where I was when I had a recent insight. It involved a dog and an elderly man, looking life-worn and gaunt in his cowboy hat and threadbare flannel shirt.

I had just finished throwing away some recyclables and was on my way back to my car. I paused when I overheard a conversation the old man was having with a middle-aged woman who seemed interested in the dog. "What breed is he?" I asked. He looked like an Indian breed I'd seen years earlier. "He's a mix," the man replied.

"He's very friendly," I said, reaching down to give the dog a tickle behind the ears. "Very calm." As I watched the dog moving from me to the woman and back again to bask in the attention we were giving him, his trust and relaxed demeanor were quite apparent. His eyes showed peace and gratitude. "I guess he's been well-treated."

"Not really," said the old man. "I rescued him from a cop who was using him in dog fights." Hearing this upset both me and the woman. Professional dog fights are brutal and ugly events and illegal in many countries, not that that stops some people from finding them exciting and rewarding.

I gazed down at the dog again considering his past, and was even more impressed by his demeanor. "That's amazing!" I said. "You'd think with his background, he'd be untrusting and vicious." Yeah," said the old man. "But every day, he saves my life." "And you, in turn, save his," I thought.

"Just think about it," I said. "Somewhere along the line, he decided he could trust humans. He had every reason in the world not to, but he chose differently. That's so unusual. He actually turned his back on a life of violence."

We conversed a little longer, then I went on my way. I thought about that exceptional dog and the old man. I thought about the bond they'd formed. I thought about the choices we humans make, often choosing to hold onto anger and resentment after we've been abused. We can choose to move on and leave the pain behind. That's often the tougher choice but one that leads to a peaceful spirit.

I remembered an article I'd read years earlier. A journalist wrote about two brothers who'd been raised in a violent, abusive home. One brother had become a career criminal and had to be interviewed while incarcerated. The other brother had married, became a responsible family man, and was active in service to his community.

At the end of each interview, the journalist asked each brother the same question: "Why do you think you've ended up in the situation you're in?" Both brothers gave the same answer. "What did you expect, considering how I was raised?"

Spirit has given each of us free will – not till we screw up -- free will, period. Each of us is free to choose our path through life. The dog and the old man I met in the dump had each made their choice and were now living with the consequences of that choice. Each of them appeared to be living a quiet life of love and peace.

About Forgiving

We

all hurt

sometimes,

and are sometimes hurt.

Let us remember to forgive.

As in the forgiving, we are forgiven.

Alan Burt



Reflections on the Longest Night of the Year

Paul Denoncourt

As I lay in my sleeping bag and tent behind the East Sandwich Meeting House on the night of December 21 –the longest night of the year – on the occasion of National Homeless Awareness Day, I was grateful that the outside temperature, while below freezing, was warmer than last year's subzero windchill. I should have fallen asleep quickly but, for some reason, slumber proved elusive. Perhaps it was road noise from nearby Route 6. Maybe it was mental ruminations on works unfinished. Whatever the cause, I was reminded of a poem by Luke Curcio:

One Winter Night

Outside for a moment alone in the night, yet not without light.
The winter's chill makes all quiet.
My breath is shown. My problems remain. My life remains.
The town slumbers. The people dream.
The bleak roar is all around me now. The cold under my skin now.
One more moment, one more breath.
My problems leave. My life remains.

Source: Posted by the poet on PoemHunter.com on August 16, 2016.



Alan Burt

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you who attended our homeless memorial service this past December 21. Our time together during dinner was a joyous occasion. Following dinner we listened to Robyn Sweeting-Stamps talk about the work she does through her homeless outreach organization, Robyn's Resources. We were given insight into the difficulty of her work and the depth of her commitment to the poor, the sick, and the homeless.

We then entered the meetinghouse and, in profound silence, held the twenty-seven people who had died homeless on the Cape during the year in the Light of God's Loving Presence and Care.

I have faith that our time and loving remembrance was felt and appreciated by those we were honoring and by God our Creator.



Clerks*

Sandwich Monthly Meeting Fran Lightsom
Capecodquakers.org

East Sandwich Preparative Meeting Barbara
Goodman
Sandwichquakers.org

West Falmouth Preparative Meeting Molly Cornell
Westfalmouthquakers.com

Yarmouth Preparative Meeting Pat Harvey
Yarmouthquakers.org

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

Back cover photo by S.
Gates, East Sandwich
Meetinghouse,
December 17, 2025.

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of
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Rita O'Donnell, Editor
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March 23. Archival
copies of *The Gazette*
are available at
[https://capecod
quakers.org/previous-
issues-of-the-gazette/](https://capecodquakers.org/previous-issues-of-the-gazette/).

