

The Traveling Friend

published by Cincinnati Friends Meeting
a Solidarity Congregation

Spring, 2018



CFM State of Society Report for 2017

Cincinnati Friends Meeting (CFM) is a Christ-centered gathering of seekers of Truth who come from a variety of spiritual experiences. We are an open and affirming congregation, and a Solidarity Congregation in cooperation with the Sanctuary movement. Some of our members and attenders are Quakers well-steeped in the practices and traditions of our faith, while others have more recently joined and find Quakerism a rich source of spiritual truth and practice.

With our Centering Down time prior to worship, varied Spiritual Nurture Groups and formal Clearness Committees, we share our seeking with one another and support one another in evolving into newer and richer understanding of God's will for us as individuals and as a community. During 2017 we welcomed new visitors nearly every week and welcomed eight new members.

During our semi-programmed worship we pray, meditate or consider our lives, our world and our choices, listen to a message from our minister and then return to silence to wait for further guidance. Spoken ministry varies greatly but is always rich and thoughtful and well-rooted in life experiences.

We have ongoing programs for youth from elementary school and younger to our active Young Friends of tweens and teens. Our children and Young Friends develop an understanding of our core Quaker testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship of the Earth, framed in a way that each child can understand and integrate our testimonies into their own value system. We encourage our children to know these testimonies within the light of Biblical insight and their own experiences, with adult guidance to provide more contemporary language and perspective. Our Young Friends have been particularly eager to frame these testimonies in their

own words and provided the sermon/message during worship of the first four testimonies during 2017.

We share our truth through our use of social media. Our newsletter and our Facebook page enable us to share events and activities with the community. These include posts about our social action and our commitment to national and local Quaker missions and organizations.

Our social action includes raising funds to support Bethany House (*mothers and children who are the victims of abuse*); our support for immigrants and the Sanctuary movement; joining marches for peace and justice; support of Tender Mercies (*homeless individuals with mental health needs*); care for the hungry (*Free Store*.) Both financially and through personal participation we support the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati and are members of AMOS in support of justice and racial equality. We continue our support for local ministries led by members and attenders of our congregation. We encourage fellowship and community through shared potluck meals on three First Days each month.

In addition to their ongoing commitment to help CFM "walk lightly on the Earth," our Trustees brought our Meetinghouse 'back to life' in 2017 following a flood in the basement that caused a fire in our furnaces. We now have energy-efficient units and 'smart' thermostats that are reducing our energy consumption. We have also formed a Landscape Committee to upgrade our grounds.

Part of truth-telling is holding hard conversations in love, as we did in 2017 by providing information on end-of-life planning with Spring Grove Cemetery and within our Meeting.

We have remained in discernment, concerned by disunity within Wilmington Yearly Meeting. We have reached out to others to try to understand different points of view and have examined our own discernment in the communal understanding of God's love and will for us. We continue in prayer for resolution and unity in WYM.

Pastor's Corner
Agreeing to differ...
Resolving to love...
Uniting to serve

..... from Jim Newby



A few years ago, I attended a seminar on the deteriorating state of civility in America. The loss of civility shows up most clearly in our society's discussion of faith and political issues, but within a Meeting or Church it can be over any number of things! In many places we have reached the point where we no longer listen to one another, but, instead, see who can debate his or her point of view the loudest. (Note: Last summer's Wilmington Yearly Meeting sessions.)

Our civility problem goes beyond being a Republican or Democrat; Baptist or Roman Catholic; rural Quaker or urban Quaker. *Our issues now are spiritual.* We care about winning our point of view in a discussion and/or argument more than we care about the person with the different point of view.

On the surface, it is easy to de-humanize someone or some group when we do not know them. I mean *really* know them. Throughout the seminar on civility, we interacted with one another, telling each other our stories. We talked about the major faith events of our lives that were *teachable* or *awakening*. We discussed the political events that have shaped us. Instead of asking "What do you believe?" we asked, "*Why* do you believe?" In the two days that we were together, we came to understand each other in a way that facilitated discussion of the issues of faith and politics, rather than hurling our opinions toward each other.

To share with one another in a civil way there must first be certain elements underlying our lives together. First is *trust*. Our whole society is built on trust. If we lose trust in one another, we will have chaos in our

Another element important to civil discourse is *the art of listening*. During the seminar I attended, two or three of us would sit together and listen to one another. Each person had three minutes to speak, and the rule was that no one could interrupt. This is not as easy as it sounds!

In our time now of talking at each other, and with short attention spans, really listening to one another is a discipline that is very difficult. And yet, if civility is to be recovered, it is necessary.

A third element in the recovery of civility has to do with *vulnerability*. To be open and vulnerable, allowing our defenses to be down as we interact with one another, will not only help us be more civil, it will help us grow spiritually. The more open and vulnerable we become, and the more authentic we can be with others, the more civil will be our discourse.

When I left Plymouth Church in Des Moines, Iowa, the Plymouth staff gave me their Church motto, framed and written in calligraphy. It now hangs in a prominent place on my study wall at home. It reads, "We agree to **differ** We resolve to **love** We unite to **serve**."

A fellowship or a society that agrees to differ but resolves to love one another will be a community that incorporates the elements of *trust*, *listening to one another*, and *vulnerability*. At times we will fail, but then we begin again. To live together requires nothing less.



The Traveling Friend is a publication of Cincinnati Friends Meeting. Please contact us with comments or questions, to add or delete names from our mailing list and for change of address.

Contact us at office@cincinnati-friends.org.

www.cincinnati-friends.org 513-791-0788

Jim Newby, Minister Judy Leasure, Editor
Kristin Lally, Design Support & Distribution

The Gospel of Inclusion.... from *Judy Leasure*

“Truth resides within each of us. I believe that truth is not so much learned or taught as remembered in the deepest recesses of the soul, the ultimate essence of the Spirit of which we all partake.” -Bishop Carlton Pearson

Carlton Pearson was born in 1953 as part of a Pentecostal Church legacy, steeped in the faith and practices of his family’s faith. He felt a call to the ministry at an early age and became one of his denomination’s most highly acclaimed ministers and voices. At the height of his ministry, he tells that a light or enlightenment came to him that would change his life to the point that not only would he be shunned from the very church that held him in such esteem, he would be shunned by his own family and friends. He would become an outcast to most who knew and who had followed him.

He would go on to become the pastor of Higher Dimensions Family Church in Oklahoma. He would be mocked as a heretic as he became a forerunner in what would become known as The Gospel of Inclusion.

Within the Gospel, Pearson proclaimed that the liberating news is that in the finished work of the cross, Jesus redeemed the entire world to God. This man who had believed in the literal words of the Bible formed a new viewpoint. “I view the Bible as the inspired words of men about God, as perceived through their own human perspectives,” he shared in words that caused him to be outcast.

Just as many in his previous church proclaimed truth from their own reading of the Bible, he began to speak about the Scriptures that point us to the Gospel of Inclusion. Among those he teaches as the basis for his faith are:

Revelations 2:4 “Let anyone with ears listen to what the Spirit is saying to the church.” The Gospel of Inclusion interprets this to affirm that the church is directed to be open to **ALL**, that the church is to reconnect with the love out of which it was born, and to be receptive to ongoing revelation.

Jeremiah 1:5 — “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you: I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” According to the beliefs of the Gospel of Inclusion, each of us is called to be our most authentic self.

Pearson cites numerous readings throughout Matthew, including the Beatitudes, where it is proclaimed by Jesus that we must include the marginalized. There is the assurance in Luke in the parable of the lost sheep that Jesus forgets **No One**.

According to Pearson, “belief compelled through fear is not belief. It is blind and forced obedience.” He emphasizes in his ministry that Jesus did not die only for Christians, but that through his death all are included in God’s universal love. His covenant is with us **ALL**.

Queries:

How does the Gospel of Inclusion relate to our leading about seeing that of God in everyone?

Are we open to listening to others?

Are we radically religious or openly spiritual?

Do we live not in the fear of God’s wrath but in the knowledge of God’s love?

If, as included in the Gospel of Inclusion, Jesus would cast out **No One**, then who among us today walks in certain righteousness as to cast out or shun another?

**Guard each man’s dignity and save each man’s pride**

*We are one in the Spirit We are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit We are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.*

And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

This hymn that speaks to our condition was written in the 1960s by a Catholic priest, Father Peter Scholtes, and inspired by John 13:35. It came from a phrase from early non-believers as they described believers, “Behold how they love one another.”

Cherish your pacifism from *Mary Peck*

Perfect timing rarely occurs and when it happens, we are grateful. On the same day I received a gracious request to consider a contribution to *Traveling Friend*, I was re-reading a Mary Oliver poem, **Points of View**. My phone interrupted my reading. The call was from a young relative whose profession is designing and assembling prosthetics for injured service personnel.

Down the pacifism path I began to travel. Time, I thought, to remind readers about this precious testimony of pacifism, with a nudge to never take the testimony for granted. My relative's poignant experiences shared with me, along with that poem from Ohio-born Mary Oliver, was, for me, a renewal of my dedication to the pacifist testimony.

Points of View

When the bullet nicks but does not kill
or the shrapnel stops but does not shear,
a man may live a life of chairs,
harness and hooks and willow limbs,
it is better than the lonely grave.

And anyway there is such cheer
in factories where the leather and the tree
take on the tender shape of hands
or legs, or feet or muscled arms.
These soldiers go to be made whole.

And if somewhere beyond the fine new factories
someone should cry out cause and effect and weep
like a man who has fallen in dreams, oh, who will hear
over the tools and smiles of the clever technicians
carving so beautifully willow hands and feet.



CFM to participate in Cincinnati Festival of Faiths

Jim Newby is serving as a member of the Steering Committee for the Cincinnati Festival of Faiths that is being sponsored by the Bridges of Faith Trialogue. This inaugural event will be held June 24 at the Cintas Center at Xavier University. We will have an information display at the event. The Bridges of Faith Trialogue includes Jewish, Islamic and Christian representatives.

Jim is also serving as a member of the Executive Committee for MARRC (*Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati*.)



The shared concerns of CFM and IJPC

CFM Peace & Social Concerns Committee Clerk Elizabeth Newby (*r*) shared time with Allison Reynolds-Berry, Executive Director of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center following her recent presentation to CFM.

Our Committee invited Allison to update our Meeting on the ongoing work of IJPC, with a particular focus on immigration. We have ongoing questions related to DACA and immigration. Allison shared the lengthy process to get legal status in our country, noting that it can take up to ten years from the time an immigrant begins the process until they obtain legal status and that many people do not have the resources and knowledge to get through that cumbersome process.

As a Solidarity congregation and supporter of IJPC and member of AMOS, several of our members and attendees are personally and communally involved in the ongoing struggle for immigrant rights in our community, which has included attending several marches and ongoing meetings and writing to our area elected officials.

Immigrant rights is one of IJPC's four focus areas. The others include human trafficking, peace and nonviolence issues and ending the death penalty in Ohio. They have been working on the death penalty issue for more than 20 years.

More information on the mission and work of IJPC is available at 513-579-8547 or online at ijpcincinnati.org.

Congratulations to our 2018 Graduates



Lily Barney is a 2018 graduate of Milford High School, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She will attend Ohio University in Athens, studying integrated media/film productions. She follows a long line of family on both sides to go to Ohio University. Lily was born into the Meeting, joining her mother and her sister Autumn.

She has enjoyed attending Quaker Knoll camp, both as a participant and a counselor. She has also been involved in First Day School, the Sharing Circle Family Nurture Group, and Young Friends. She has been an energetic and supportive volunteer with her mother's ministry, *Artsy Fartsy*. Recently she did custodial work at the Meetinghouse while Joan Effertz was travelling. She is the daughter of Tad and Cathy Barney.

Riley Leasure is graduating from East Central High School in Indiana, where she was active in drama and music. Some of her favorite memories of CFM are the times she spent at Quaker Knoll camp. She will be attending Ivy Tech in Indiana.

She is the daughter of Adam Leasure, Robyn Gilb and step-daughter of Ginny Leasure. She is the granddaughter of Paul and Judy Leasure.

Her sister Millie, daughter of Adam and Ginny, is graduating from kindergarten. Her two favorite things at CFM are doing arts and crafts with First Day teacher Patia Williams and putting money in the collection box because it helps people.



Rachel Gaede is graduating from Indian Hill High School. She will be attending Savannah College of Art and Design to study photography and ad design.

She has been one of our most active Young Friends, including being a part of sharing messages about our Testimonies during Meeting for worship. She is the daughter of Julie Shore and Scott Gaede.



Jeff Arnold (Trustees) and Debbie Overmyer, Hospitality Coordinator, preside over the ribbon cutting for the newest addition to our kitchen. The beautiful new table was designed by Jeff and installed in the kitchen by Trustees and other volunteers. Jeff notes that the table was built by the same family business that built the pews in our sanctuary. Debbie has graciously been serving as our Hospitality Coordinator for many years, overseeing our potluck meals that are held three Sundays each month following worship.

My travels to Cubafrom Suzanne Johnson

Cuba is a beautiful tropical island just 90 miles south of Florida. A land full of history and friendly people! From January 19 through January 29 I was one of 16 to travel with TourMagination to see Cuba firsthand. Our group was led by Jack and Irene Suderman from Ontario, Canada. Jack is a university professor who teaches world history. He is also a Mennonite minister. He has made over 30 trips to Cuba helping to train ministers in church leadership.

Mennonites, Church of the Brethren and Quakers were represented in our group. Our first few days were spent in Havana and included a city bus tour, a visit to the National Museum of the Revolution, walking tours of the Old City, visiting craft markets and a side trip to a tobacco farm.

We visited the Martin Luther King Centre, the Cuban Council of Churches, the Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue, and the Brethren in Christ Leadership Training Centre. We listened to leaders share their stories in these places, in addition to worshipping with a local congregation on Sunday morning. Early mornings and late evenings were spent sharing our myths about Cuba and our insights as the week progressed.

After Havana we traveled by bus to the Bay of Pigs and the cities of Varadero and Cienfuegos. Hearing their side of the story was a wakeup call for me as a tourist. Over and over we heard the people wonder why we don't lift the embargo that keeps them from progressing more rapidly economically. Our native guide Michelle assured us they are a happy people with the highest literacy rate in the world, with everyone receiving the health care they need, where no one is homeless and there is no hunger, and where there is free unlimited education for all.

The Cuban people seem poor according to our standards, but we were assured that they are thankful for what they have. No one seemed to envy our country. Of course, they are not free to express themselves in the same way we are.

Hearing stories was my favorite part of the trip. Our leader Jack had a treasure of tales to tell! In 1988, he was one of a small group of pastors to meet late one night with Fidel Castro. Fidel had heard of their visit to the island and had some questions for them about



That's Suzanne in the front seat of an old convertible enjoying the Cuban sun.

the church. He had grown up attending a Roman Catholic school before Vatican II. With everything in Latin, it wasn't easy to get answers to his questions. He said he heard enough though to want to know more about this Jesus of Nazareth. He felt he was somehow following Jesus in the way that he taught people how to live.

He asked the pastors if they did not see the elimination of homelessness, how seniors were cared for, how they in Cuba were feeding the masses and all that socialism was providing. He denied that he was inspired by Karl Marx and the Communist Manifesto. He was adamant that the revolution was instead inspired by the Carpenter that Christians follow. Jack saw the good in Fidel, as well as the malevolence. His gathering with the pastors gave cause to consider how one country may have had a different history if churches had reacted and responded differently.

This trip was a wonderful learning experience in so many ways, historically, culturally and spiritually. There were also really good times making new friends and so much fun riding in the old cars, going on boat rides and spending a day at the beach.

As one might expect, we left the island with more questions than when we came. I feel it is a high privilege and a grave responsibility to reap the benefits of seeing how other countries view themselves and how they view us. For me, traveling opens doors I would never dream existed!



Fellowship in support of Wilmington School

Libbie Curry, 2nd from left, (Chester Friends Meeting) joined us following Meeting for Worship to share information about Wilmington Yearly Meeting's shared Cuba mission. Joining her in the presentation were Joyce Peters, Wilmington Friends, Harold Curry and Becky Godfrey from Chester Friends.

We at Cincinnati Friends are joyfully joining with other Meetings in Wilmington Yearly Meeting in support of a mission to raise \$12,000 to assist with the building of a new bathroom complex at the old Wilmington School in Puerto Padre, Cuba. This is part of the overall reconstruction of what was known as the Wilmington School. There is also a Quaker Meetinghouse next to the school, with more than 50 members. The Meetinghouse has been renovated.

Wilmington Yearly Meeting established the school in Cuba in 1904. During the Cuban Revolution, the government took over the site and closed it. It has been empty for many years. In 2014, the Cuban government turned the building back to Cuba Yearly Meeting, but it can't be used for a school.

The people of Puerto Padre want to rebuild the site and use it for a community center to hold social events and other activities, as well as raise money by renting it out to other churches and organizations. The 1950 addition is almost finished being repaired, which includes a new kitchen and sewer system. The original building has no roof.

More than 20 people from Wilmington Yearly Meeting have visited Puerto Padre recently and came back inspired to once again be a visible and spiritual partner in re-establishing the old site.

Under their leading, Meetings from throughout WYM are now participating in a fundraising project, with CFM as one of the Meetings supporting this meaningful mission project.

Along with other Meetings, our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has distributed Mason jars for us to take home and fill up with our spare change, and, as Libbie encourages, there is also room in the jars for paper money as well. We will then turn in our jars with our collections and all the money we raise at CFM will be put together with collections from other Meetings, with that goal of raising \$12,000!

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has approved a \$100 donation from their budget to start off our effort, which is being led by Barb Napier.

Barb will collect our coins (*and paper money*) from our jars. When you get your jar filled, bring it to her at Meeting and she will then get you another one to continue collecting. She will keep us updated on how we are doing at CFM. If you want to participate and can't get to Meeting, you can mail donations as well, made payable to Cincinnati Friends Meeting, *memo Wilmington School*, 8075 Keller Road, Cincinnati, 45243.



First-hand experiences in leading, listening and trust were an important part of our Young Friends Game Night at the Meetinghouse in April. Albert Ebner leads his brother Merle (who is blindfolded) through an obstacle course as part of the activities.

Cincinnati Friends Meeting

8075 Keller Road
Cincinnati OH 45243



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The Wilmington College Collegium Musicum led us in worship with the beautiful sounds of music from the 13th century through the 19th century during our 5th Sunday in April. The group, which has been under the direction of Elizabeth Haskins since 1978, plays on reproductions of historical wind and string instruments, as well as acoustic guitars. Bringing us the gift of music were (*l-r*) Patrick Copeland, Brandon Ford, Elizabeth Haskins, Kelsey Truex, Stephen Potthoff, Samantha Zimmerman and Lori Ann Scott. Collegium Musicum was founded in 1971 by the late Professor of Music Emeritus Robert J. Haskins. Fifth Sundays are our time at CFM for silent unprogrammed worship or special messages or presentations.

Seeking God daily through simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality.