

San Diego Friends Meeting:

Sundays 10:30-11:30, 3850 Westgate Place, San Diego CA 92106

May 2009

Local Announcements:

Business Meeting is postponed this month until May 17

The Red Lotus Society has invited us to join in the First Annual Sit-a-Thon at their meditation studio downtown, 540 3rd.Avenue, May 9. Forrest Curo volunteered to organize one hour specifically for Quaker worship at 3:00 p.m., but we are also welcome to participate in meditation sessions led by representatives of other religious traditions, from 7:00 a.m. until the final session starts at 8:00 p.m. The full schedule is on redlotussociety.org, where they would like you to register (free) if you intend to come.

May 16 Annual Workathon, an occasion for contributing to the Peace Resource Center via donations or volunteer labor, from 9:00 a.m. to mid-afternoon. For more information, contact the Peace Resource Center (info@prcsd.org, 619-263-9301) or Project YANO (760-634-3604).

This month Forrest Curo follows Anne Curo & the Carlocks in the May art exhibit in Bard Hall, First Unitarian Church. The reception begins 6:30 on Tuesday May 19, followed by an artists' discussion and show-&-tell session

To register for this year's joint retreat with La Jolla Meeting (May 29-31 in Ramona, contact Rachel Clibborn or Alison Lawrance.

The June potluck is to be June 5, 6:00 pm, at Wesley & Katrina Mason's place, program tba.

Pacific Yearly Meeting is to be at Walker Creek Ranch, Marin County, Monday July 27 --Saturday, August 1.

What Does 'Stewardship' Look Like?

The advices and queries for this month, which you can find on page 49 of [Faith and Practice](#), are on "Stewardship and Vocation."

The Bible, whatever you may think of it, was the historical source of these queries.

The laws of the Torah reflect a different, less secular view of the ethics of ownership: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is Mine; with Me you are merely aliens and tenants." That land was considered to be given by God for human needs; so that a hungry person was allowed to eat from a neighbor's field (but not to bring a container.) Similarly, you could not charge interest from a fellow Israelite, but were expected to "open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor" even if debts were soon expected to be written off.

When Rabbi Hillel found that rich landowners had become reluctant to lend to poor neighbors, he invented the prozbul, an arrangement whereby a lender could always expect to foreclose if his loan wasn't repaid. Later, as local elites increasingly adopted Roman ways, including their more commercially-oriented treatment of land and people, more and more small farmers lost their land entirely. William Herzog, in [Prophet and Teacher](#), says that Jesus was talking less about 'sins' than about very literal debts, and that many parables began as concrete examples of how contemporary economic practices violated Torah. Even if you already suspected that Jesus had an ironic edge, Herzog's approach often brings out unexpected clarity, even to Jesus' praise of the Unjust Steward

But that isn't how we normally read the Parable of the Talents, which is rather clearly about how people use what we've been given--that is, about precisely what [Faith and Practice](#) calls "Stewardship." We may apply the word to our concern for careful handling of the Meeting's finances--But helpful as these funds have been to me, our most vital resources are things like:

- 1) The Meeting for Worship itself.
- 2) The people we've met there.
- 3) Whatever faith (More about this elsewhere!) and understanding we can share and generate between us.
- 4) The inheritance of faith and understanding available from earlier Friends, from the Bible they respected, from people and scriptures of other religions.

How well are we looking after all this? Are we letting it grow, or keeping it safely buried?

Forrest Curo

Faith, Who Needs It?

I first met the word “faith” as a demand to “believe it or else,” as an all-too-human form of violence against my sense of truth.

More recently, for many years in this Meeting, I have yearned to see more faith at work among us! Is this my way of mugging the integrity of my Friends here?

Oh, I am indeed a contentious man (a fact I will not agonize over!) but this is not about imposing my no-doubt superior belief-system. (I have even been wrong about some things, in the past!)

The God some of us don’t believe in, the one who allegedly runs us through a rigorous cost-benefit analysis after our deaths, should certainly be satisfied with the political Good Works of those of us who don’t “believe in” him. But I don’t believe in a God who fits that description; that is, I don’t believe the doctrine that God is like that, nor do I “belove” (the root word) such a being. I know the God who exists, in the same sense in which I “know” any person--incompletely, but with a feeling of what is in character for them, and what would not be.

How can one silly, not entirely well-wrapped human claim to know a being of unlimited knowledge and power? It can be fun, even helpful, arguing such matters, but I want to leave you with something better.

Years ago I wrote to an old close friend, and she wrote back; and we were both sorry about things we’d done wrong, and glad we’d known each other, and even more glad we’d found our present companions. Toward the end of her letter, she wrote: “My hardships, of many varieties, have led to an unshakeable faith, in Someone/thing-or-other, and I find *great* comfort in *that*.”

Do I mean: “Because she has suffered, and now is grateful for something she calls ‘faith,’ you should ‘believe in’ ‘Someone/thing-or-other’?”

Not that. The Society of Friends was formed by people who insisted their lives were being overwhelmed by something they might argue about, but couldn’t doubt. Those of us who survived the 60’s spiritual movement knew our own version of that, and we wonder why so few contemporary Friends feel free to speak of it.

Having written this far, I didn’t know what to say next. So I gave up and opened a book that arrived yesterday, one I’d ordered to replace my worn-out photocopy of it: Ursula Jane O’Shea, Living The Way. Right off the bat, she starts talking about the Parable of the Talents [See piece on front page; this looks like a coincidence, and like one with an obvious explanation, but: “Oh wow! Heavy, man!” isn’t the point. This is a

way that guidance works; this is how it appears sometimes, as a natural consequence of attention to some subject or other. It isn’t always this simple!] O’Shea says, “In the course of being pursued by this parable I began to wonder: what if the ruler was not administering punishment for the servant’s behavior, but describing the inevitable consequences of what he had done? What if the spiritual gifts we have received are not static treasures? Perhaps we are to use them or lose them.... Spiritual experience and gifts are enlivening, functional and transformative only when their impact flows over into the daily life of the person and a wider community.”

So if you’re a Friend of the Spirit, please don’t be shy about it; we need to see it working through you! If you don’t know what I mean... A story: I was first invited to meeting in 1961. I knew that what people said about God was absurd. But to know that God didn’t exist, that would be a sad, lonesome thing to be right about! Okay, so I’d sit through this hour and give It a chance to speak for Itself. I heard nothing, (almost) end of story. But I was still going to the Unitarian Church; it was kind of boring but you weren’t expected to believe anything, and I’d heard one could meet *girls* that way! When I eventually did meet a girl, elsewhere, she dragged me *into* Unitarian Church services... but she was so impressive, I started to wonder, what did she *mean*, “God”? And then it started teaching me.

If you, too, miss Anne Penery and her messages, Alison sees her each week and “would be glad to take messages to her.” Not much news this time (So send me *more*): a potluck Anne & I much enjoyed hosting, a new address soon for Virginia: 849 Coast Blvd, LC 209, La Jolla CA 92037.

We got Pam Rider’s address wrong last time:
Correct is 4235 Copeland Avenue.

from:

San Diego Friends Meeting
3850 Westgate Place
San Diego, CA 92105

to: