

NORTH VALLEY FRIENDS ANNOUNCEMENTS | 1.19.21

AWESome Kits

Feel free to swing through the carport tomorrow, Wednesday, from 4:30-6pm to borrow an AWESome kit from Emily Cammack.

Vacations

Both Kim Boyd & Nate Macy are on vacation this week. Feel free to reach out to Leslie Murray or Sammy Sanders!

Unprogrammed Worship, Sunday @ 9:30am

Unprogrammed worship will meet on Zoom this Sunday. Nate will send the link out on Friday.

Middle School and High School - Friday Zoom Fun!

(School days have been pushed back due to the MLK holiday so because there is school on Friday, there won't be Friday Fun zoom this Friday (1/22))

Join us at 2pm for Friday Fun (Each Friday in Jan. - Feb) on Zoom for connection and virtual party games. Bring your own snack—it would also be helpful for each person to have a phone/tablet and each household to have one additional phone/tablet. (So one youth might need two devices, a two youth household needs three, etc.). As always we appreciate pets on screen Find the zoom link here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5414181688>

Fodge Baby Shower

We'll still be hosting a drive-through at North Valley on Sunday, January 24th from 2:00-3:30pm to collect the shower gifts for sweet baby Elanor who arrived a bit early. We hope you'll get to meet her on Zoom at some point soon when she is home and healthy! Liz and Tim are registered here: babylist.com/baby-fodge. They have also started a college fund for Elanor if you'd like to contribute in that way. Please stop by if you can, and we'll also snap a photo of you in your car to share with the Fodges, who unfortunately cannot be present. You can even go all out and make a sign in support and celebration of them if you'd like! We'll have a little treat for you for the road too! If you have any questions, ask Amy at fortmacy@gmail.com.

Chair for Tiny Home

Leslie is wondering if anyone has a chair they have to donate to the second tiny home? There isn't any place to sit in the tiny home and hoping for one or two sitting chairs (small ones!) or a small love seat. Please contact Leslie Murray at Leslie@northvalleyfriends.org if you have something that might work. Our next guest moves in tomorrow!

<u>2020-2021 Budget (July-Jun) General Fund Tithes and Offering</u>	
Donations are accepted at northvalleyfriends.org	
Need more info? E-mail Ceress Sanders at ceress.sanders@gmail.com	
<u>January 2021</u> Budgeted Tithes/Offerings:	\$18,352.50
January 2021 Tithes/Offerings Received through 1.17.21	\$9,240.00
Percent of Month's Projected Tithes/Offerings Received:	50.35%
<u>Fiscal Year</u> Budgeted Tithes/Offerings To Date (July-Dec 2020):	\$136,000.00
Tithes/Offerings Received To Date (July-Dec 2020):	\$123,162.51
Percent of Budget/Offerings Received (July-Dec 2020):	90.56%
<u>Emergency/Benevolent Fund Balance:</u>	\$5,794.44

Ron Mock's Written Reflection

Some folks were asking for a written reflection from Ron Mock and I've attached it here:

Good morning Friends.

Melanie and I have been attending here for a few years now, but I have been pretty quiet in our meetings. Which might surprise some of you who know it's hard to shut me up if you put me in a room of students. On the other hand, some of you have been those students, so you may consider it a blessing that neither God nor mortal has unleashed me on the congregation.

But I hope you will forgive the pastors for slipping up and inviting me to share this morning. How could they know any better? Some of them never took any of my classes, and Leslie never finished any.

I am here because a question has been heavy on my heart for a long time now: how can we help heal our frayed political culture, both locally and nationally?

Normally, I am pretty upbeat amid conflict. We serve a loving, omnipotent God. A loving God would never be content leaving someone without means to meet their needs. An omnipotent God would never be powerless to create an option. So it must always be possible for God to give everyone a path to meeting their needs... although God will not force us to take that path.

This is a super useful attitude when you are mediating a conflict, as I do sometimes. It means I can be the last one in the room to lose hope. When disputing people at a mediation tell me how useless it's going to be, I can understand their pessimism, but still keep right on expecting things to turn out pretty well. Usually they do.

A few years ago, in the most important mediation of my life so far, they didn't. I worked with Mark Ankeny and Phil Smith to help Newberg Friends Church find a safe and happy outcome. Instead, the church split right down the middle, with some going one way, and others going another. I was among the third group who felt like our church had disappeared right out from under our feet.

I felt an echo of that feeling again on January 6 of this year. Something I was confident would never happen, began to happen. It didn't finish happening -- Congress reconvened and carried out their duty to accept the electoral vote. But I still have that feeling. We are not out of the woods. It feels like our country could still disappear right out from under our feet.

It's enough to make me wonder if I am foolish to be so hopeful about conflict, to keep expecting to find a way that gives everyone access to means to meet their needs. America's polarization has reached heights we haven't seen in over a century. Our main political parties have done about what they've always done: demonizing each other to gain votes. But now they've been joined by swarms of pundits from both ends of the spectrum who have learned to make money off us by scaring us and enraging us several times a day on the internet. The easiest way to do that is to turn political opponents into mortal enemies, willing agents of evil.

As a politics professor, I see this problem as disorder in our political culture -- specifically its hyper-polarization. Americans -- both as citizens and as political leaders -- are isolating themselves into political bubbles more now than any time in at least a century. We not only vote in separate camps, we are likelier to live in separate neighborhoods, and less likely to marry - or even have friendships -- across political lines. As we Quakers have recently demonstrated, we are also more likely to worship in separate churches.

When we polarize like this we inevitably lose track of the humanity of our opponents. We demonize them instead. We are likely to collect all the examples of our opponents' worst behavior, assemble them into a caricature, and apply the caricature to the entire population of our opponents.

People believe this stuff, it turns out, and they believe the lies that go with it -- which has sent us into a tight spiral of ever-increasing polarization, fear, anger, and radicalization. The effects of this trend can be seen right down to our local governments, such as the City Council (where Bryce Coefield serves) and the school board (where Polly Peterson and Mindy Allison served recently, and where I still do).

It's worse now for America than it was for Newberg Friends or Northwest Yearly Meeting before they split. But we Quakers couldn't hold ourselves together, even though our differences covered only a fraction of the span now splitting our nation. Our congregations and our yearly meeting were full of people we loved, sometimes our own families, but we now no longer worship together.

It makes me want to crawl into a bunker somewhere. It makes me want to draw my family in and hunker down. It makes me want to pray to God "come quickly, Lord, and put all to right."

God will not answer that prayer the way I want. I know this because of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Satan finds Jesus hungry, not having eaten for 40 days. Satan realizes this is his big chance to topple God's redemptive plan for the world. So these temptations are going to be Satan's very best shots.

The first is to make stones into bread. It sounds like a little domestic chore: whip up some lunch! Is this really one of the biggest three temptations Satan could come up with? It doesn't seem like much. Maybe that's the point: any small concession to temptation might undo something important about Jesus.

But I think there's a much bigger implication here. Jesus and Satan both knew hunger is entirely avoidable. God can zap stones into scones right and left, day and night.

So Satan's temptation is not just about a breakfast for Jesus. It's also about ending human hunger by fiat.

But Jesus refuses.

This is shocking. God who loves us like parents love their children, or like a shepherd loves the sheep, has never fed us by fiat, although that has always been possible. The cost has been immense: at every moment in known human history, millions of people have gone hungry. But somehow Satan would win if Jesus ended that suffering by a snap of his fingers.

The second temptation is like the first, except the problem Satan is tempting Jesus to solve is dysfunctional government. Anarchy is NOT the state of nature, for humans. We humans always make governance, wherever we gather. But we mess things up. Sometimes that produces anarchy, or tyranny, or corruption -- what I call the three political miseries.

Jesus could straighten things out by fiat, Satan is saying. "Take over, Jesus. I'll help you. Let's not leave government to these poor humans anymore. They can't get it right."

Jesus refuses.

In the third temptation, Satan offers to give everything away. "Make your divinity explicit, Jesus. Jump off the Temple -- the angels will come and rescue you, and everyone will see it." Satan is willing to end doubt, to help Jesus trumpet the reality of God's existence and power.

Jesus refuses.

I am floored every time I read this passage. God is supposed to be the loving one, but it's Satan who is trying to solve our problems for us. God leads us by still waters and into green pastures, but won't feed us, make good decisions for us, or become tangible to us. Satan wants Jesus to do all three.

Because I believe it is God who loves us, and not Satan, there has to be something even more important than ending hunger, calming all civil strife, or removing all doubt as quickly as possible.

I don't know for sure what is going on here. All I have is faith -- which is to say, all I have is something I don't **know** to be true, but which I am willing to act as if it is true.

Here are some things which, either singly or taken together, must be more important than ending human suffering: human free will, human faith, human creativity, human interdependence, and ultimately human love.

If God took over as dictator of human government, we would lose our free will. The only way an infinite omnipotent God can preserve the free will of tiny, finite humanity is to exercise self-restraint.

If God was explicit, as tangible as the chair you're sitting on, we would never need faith. We'd never have to act as if something is true without KNOWING it is true. This may another way God protects our agency; our wills would be overwhelmed if we could see God directly.

If God met all our physical needs by fiat, we would lose our chance to exercise creativity to solve real problems. And we'd never have to work with other people. We'd wake up every morning with new manna in the fridge -- and probably fuss if the morning's flavor was English walnut rather than peach. We'd lose moral agency both as individuals and as communities.

Which means we'd lose our capacity to love each other. Maybe there'd still be a chance at shallow romantic love. But there would never be the need for Christ-like sacrificial love. Why sacrifice anything, if God is going to fix all our problems for us?

The point of Jesus' temptation seems to me to be this: God built what we need into the universe at creation, but we are going to have to work with others to find and use God's providence.

God doesn't abandon us. God has already equipped the world with the resources we need to meet each other's needs. The cure to COVID comes with the disease. It is the disease itself! We make vaccines out of the very virus that's trying to kill us. This did not have to be true. The universe -- already itself an entirely unnecessary miracle -- did not have to package the cures to diseases with the diseases themselves.

But God loves us so much. The cures to our ills lie at our fingertips. In the case of COVID, they might be literally on your fingertips right now.

People -- you and me and our difficult neighbors -- are part of God's providence, too. And people have two amazing advantages over other aspects of God's providence.

First, humans are spiritual beings who can respond to God's leading. This means we are adaptable. We can respond to nuances in the environment, pick up after each other, fill breaches in the line.

Second, humans bring disagreements. Their disagreement is a gift from God, because it is necessary to the process of discovering God's truth.

This, too, is part of God's love. God created us to be diverse. Our DNA is unique, our life experiences are different, we have different aptitudes and interests, we even look different. We were designed to disagree. It's a feature, not a bug. It makes us, as a species, smarter because we come to our problems having explored different paths. Even identical twins know more as a team than they do alone.

In any important challenge, we are going to have to work specifically with those who disagree with us. We should probably go seek them out. (I admit here -- as I could at several points in this talk -- that I am not very good at seeking out the people I disagree with. My discussion at this point is more aspirational than experiential.)

But, of course, disagreement can destroy as easily as it can create. It all depends on how we approach our disagreements. And here is where January 6th looms in my mind. We aren't doing very well at treating our disagreements as a fundamental resource.

This is why we are tempted to pray something like "God! Come fix this for us! Remove our opponents! Help us take over, kick them out, shut them down."

Did you notice how close this prayer skates to Satan's temptations?

The mob in the Capitol on January 6th was trying to put into effect this very prayer.

Maybe Christ-followers' prayers should be different.

God please help us, my opponents and me.

Help me to see my opponents as a precious gift, part of your Providential love.

Help me to embrace our disagreement as part of that gift.

Help me to find among my opponents at least one who is willing to work with me to discover the paths you have already created to meeting all our needs.

Help me to listen until I can state my opponents' views to their satisfaction.

Help me to build with my opponents a creative relationship in which we all can learn your will.

Help us to love each other and out of that love serve those around us in some practical way, bringing us all into paths you have already created.

If you'd like to help explore this more, check out the George Fox University Civility Project Website at <https://sites.google.com/georgefox.edu/gfcivilityproject/home>