

**Visalia Friends Meeting**  
17208 Ave 296 Visalia, CA 93292

## Newsletter

August, 2009



Visalia Friends Meetinghouse

### Simplicity

In the words of William Penn, “*True godliness don’t draw men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it.*” Elsewhere he commented: “*It is a reproach to religion and government to suffer so much poverty and excess.*”

Poverty within a wealthy society is unjust, cruel, and often linked to skin color, gender, and language. We must examine our own privilege and role in the economic order that deepens this disparity. Friends should be alert to oppression and injustice, and persistent in working against them.

We value our part in shaping the laws of our country. Our task is to see that laws serve God’s purposes and build a just social order. Our first allegiance should be to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the state, we serve our country best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.

If, by divine leading, our attention is focused on a law that is contrary to God’s law, we must proceed with care. Before acting, Friends should pray for further guidance and speak with the Meeting, family members, and all those who might be affected by the decision. If a decision involves disobedience to the law, we should make the grounds of our action clear to all concerned and be prepared to suffer any penalties without evasion. As a community, we must care for those who suffer for conscience’s sake.

What am I doing to carry my share of responsibility for the government of our community, nation, and world?

Am I persistent in my efforts to promote constructive change?

*How do we attend to the suffering of others in our local community, in our state and nation, and in the world community?*

*Do we try to understand the causes of suffering, and do we address them as a Meeting?*

*How do we, individually and as a Meeting, support the organizations that work to bring the testimonies of Friends into reality in our society?*

**Visalia Friends Meeting ..... Meeting for Business.....August 9, 2009**

**Members and Attenders Present:** Bill Lovett, Beth Lovett, Graciela Martinez, David & Klara East, Greg Seastrom, Alexandra Von Werde, Heather Howard, Cayman Howard, Luis and Melissa Alberti-Araujo, Patti Howard, Olga McCalister . Joanne & David Dudley, John & Shirley Dackawich, Ginger Curtis, Linn Mclane, Jessi Snyder, Dina Restivo, Nolan Marshall, Andrea Ball, Kelsey Ruehling, Phoebe Castro, Dan O’Connell, Nate Secrest

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The Meeting Clerk Greg Seastrom first read the agenda. He read from the Daily Readings from Quaker Spirituality on *Creation Doth Groan by John Woolman*. Also read was Faith and Practice Advice and Queries on *Simplicity*.

The clerk reviewed the agenda to be covered for the meeting.

The Meeting began in silence.

**Newsletters and Organization Newsletters:** Greg reviewed other Meeting Newsletters, Opportunities for Contribution, and Friends Organizational News. All these are available on the back counter. These items have been place in folders on the back counter.

**Agenda Items and Announcements:**

**PYM Report:** Nate Secrest, Kelsey Ruehling, Andrea Ball presented on youth activities at Pacific Yearly Meeting and Ben Lomond’s Teen Camp. They reported on the close camaraderie experienced by teens at PYM. They spoke of the positive experiences they shared among teen Friends. Teen Friends shared in Quaker process and fun activities as well as explored spiritual themes and topics through workshops. Klara reported on the primary decision making on hiring a Youth Program Coordinator for PYM. She was impressed by the process on reaching consensus. Bill Lovett also reported on the decision making process of creating the position. This was a difficult issue which Friends grappled. Teens were also involved in the decision making process as well.

Klara delivered the minute on the Youth Program Coordinator position. There is a continuing conversation on the possible testimony on Unity with Nature. Klara also spoke of PYM’s affiliation with Friends General Conference which was postponed for a later time. VFM members attending PYM were Bill Lovett, Greg Seastrom, Klara East, Ginger Curtis-Ruehling. Greg spoke of a workshop on supporting Friends and their leadings. Bill talked about the biographical meeting held in the early mornings that explored the influence of Friends on Quakerdom. Next Quarterly Meeting will be held October 16<sup>th</sup> at Sierra Friends Center in Nevada City.

**Membership:**

Friends heartily welcomed Graciela Martinez as a member of Visalia Friends Meeting.

- **Requests:** Current requests are Jessi Snyder, Heather Howard, and Cayman Howard. Jessi will be held over for another month. Greg met with Clearness Committee and the Committee recommends Cayman’s membership. This will season for a month. Bill reported on Heather Howard’s request and the Clearness Committee meeting. That Committee also brings forth a recommendation for her acceptance for membership. This request will season for one month as well.

**Naming Committee:** The Naming Committee has yet to convene and will report next month.

**Meeting Directory:** Greg distributed the Meeting Directory to Friends. Many thanks goes to Ginger Curtis for compiling the directory. Klara also brought back directories from PYM. Ginger urged us to keep the directory up to date. Greg suggested that this be done on an annual basis. Copies are available to Friends on request to the Clerk.

**Quarterly Meeting Report:** Klara East and Ginger Curtis attended Quarterly Meeting at Ben Lommond. Klara and Ginger reported on the activities of the weekend that was focused on youth. She reviewed some of the workshops, plenaries and activities during the weekend. Ginger talked about the discussion of PYM hiring a youth coordinator and the variety of concerns that arose. Klara encouraged all Friends to attend quarterly meetings.

**Committee Reports:**

- Ministry and Oversight – Greg reported on Clearness Committees for new members.
- Building and Grounds – Greg read Bob Marshall’s report. There has been an update on outdoor play equipment, a request for a bike rack and future investigation on a green cemetery.
- Outreach – Graciela reported that she is looking for someone to replace her as convener.
- Unity with Nature – Klara reported that they had met and are working on the “Transition Communities” project. She has ordered several copies of the “The Transition Handbook” please see her for a copy at the cost of \$12. The Committee will meet next Sunday after worship.

**Retreat:** Jessi reported that the Committee will be meeting shortly. Ginger has been added to the Committee.

**Quaker Oaks Farm Project:**

Quaker Oaks Farm met and has a standing potluck meeting each second Tuesday at 6:00 for potluck and meeting at the Friend’s Meeting House. Dan reported that there are projects underway and that they will be looking at the non-profit application.

**Concerns:** Ginger talked about the difficulty of finding hosts for the Meeting. She shared concerns that the food preparation was overly difficult. That perhaps the burden for providing so much food prevents Friends from signing up to host. Dan encouraged all to sign up. Many Friends expressed the importance of the fellowship with the meal after Meeting and that we need to be diligent in signing up for hosting. We encourage all Friends to share food in a potluck style. The host is only responsible for bringing just a snack. Some Friends may need help so it was suggested that teams or partners be formed as well. Shirley announced that there is still a need for sign ups for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday.

**Robert Simon:** John reported that our prisoner Friend, Robert Simon, had dropped out of the Clemency project. John has requested that the Project return the funds back to the Meeting. John expressed concern about the situation and will keep us posted.

The Meeting ended in silence.

David East, Recording Clerk