

## Meeting for Worship

January 14, 2018

Led by Dillwyn Otis with assistance by Sally Otis

Music by Claire Howard

Prelude

Welcome: Sally

Readings read by Sally

“Distinguish the Dawn”

An old rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun.

“Could it be,” asked one of the students “when you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it’s a sheep or a dog?”

“No,” answered the rabbi.

Another asked, “Is it when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it’s a fig tree or a peach tree?”

“No,” answered the rabbi.

“Then when is it?” the pupils demanded.

“It is when you can look on the face of any man or woman and see that it is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot see this, it is not night.”

Hasidic Tale quoted in **Peacemaking Day by Day**. I located it in **100 Ways to Keep your Soul Alive** by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

“Live in a Large Moral House”

I am personally thankful that we live together in a large moral house even if we do not drink at the same fountain of faith. The world we experience together is one world, God’s world, and our world, and the problems we share are common human problems. So we can talk together, try to understand each other, and help each other.

Written by Lewis B. Smedes in **Choices**. Again I located it in **100 Ways to Keep your Soul Alive** by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat.

Our first hymn is “What A Friend We have in Jesus”.

Scripture was read by Dill. It is the story of the Prodigal Son found in Luke 15: 11-32

2<sup>nd</sup> hymn was “Stand By Me” from the green hymnal page 181 (Not the common tune or words to us but applicable.

Joys and Concerns

Piano Interlude

Prayer

3<sup>rd</sup> hymn “No Man Is an Island”

Message

Message for Friends Meeting                      January 14, 2018

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays of each month several volunteers from our Meeting gather in a small room with a small number of inmates at Cayuga Correctional Facility at Moravia.

After greeting each other our gathering begins with a check in where we share what of importance has happened since we last met. Over the years of sharing and listening our group has developed an understanding of each other that makes me realize how many of the same thoughts and concerns we share. What I have learned from these men inside The Facility is how grateful they are that we have taken the time to meet with them and the caring spirit that develops among us .

In the parable of the “prodigal son” the father ultimately sees both of his sons as being worthy. Likewise in our small worship group we grow to see each other as worthy.

My experience inside the prison brings to mind a line from a song sung by Joan Baez back in the 60’s---

“Show me the prison, Show me the Jail,

                    Show me the prisoner, whose life has gone stale,

                    And I’ll show you a young man with so many reasons why,

                                    There but for poor fortune go you and I.”

What I would like to share with you today is that in my life I have had good fortune...&... I suggest it is because of friends.

We sang “What a Friend we Have in Jesus” as our opening music partly because I began singing this song 70 or more years ago here in this Meeting House. Back then I envisioned “Friend Jesus” who helped us “with our load and care”, as a man with a long robe and full beard and long hair. But now that I have taken the time to read the lines I see we are singing of the relationship that can lift us from low places.

Not to lesson in any way the importance of salvation being taught in the song, but for my message today I am thinking of multiple friends who have helped me before I got to those low places. Those friends have contributed to my good fortune.

My home life provided some early lessons;

One silly little example, call it a soft parental guidance in the area of truth telling. It took place on a winter day when I had completed a very lack luster experience of sledding across the road from our house. I stated to my family that on my sled I traveled under our neighbor’s horse’s belly (behind the front and ahead of the back feet). My mother’s response to that embellished story was “thee must have dreamed that” . Another little sideline ... In my family my parents used plain language within our home. This was different from any of my school mates. In Sherwood in the fall there was held a grade school open house & the last thing I wanted was to be singled out from the other kids, thus I was concerned that My mother or dad might in public ask Dillwyn, “is this thy desk” . No worry they did not. Plain language was only used in our home.

Going further from home but I’m still on the topic of friends. Now I was serving in Nigeria as a Peace Corps volunteer & my job there was working alongside a Nigerian counterpart on a Farm Settlement. We had a good relationship and the work was fulfilling. I however experienced loneliness in the hours after work. Mr. Okko became that friend that saved my sanity by inviting me every Sunday

evening for a hymn sing. Mr. Okko was also a stranger in this town of Lalupon, in Western Nigeria. He was a Nigerian and a Seventh Day Adventist Missionary coming from the Eastern region of Nigeria to operate a clinic and midwifery. I remember now only a single line of one of those Hymns “bringing in the sheaves” You’re lucky I have forgotten the rest & will not attempt to sing. His guidance and company was certainly my good fortune.

He reminded me of a neighbor back home in Sherwood who likewise helped keep me on the right track. Two individuals from a different nation on a different continent of a different color but had the same goal to guide my development.

In addition to Mr. Okko another Nigerian named Odola became my friend. He chose to pass leisure time with me. Odola likely had family responsibilities he should have been tending to but often we would sit at the gas station and watch the world go by. Our conversations were limited as he knew very little English and I knew very little Yoruba. He however helped me understand the culture responding to my actions with either affirmation or hesitation. I helped him when he had a family emergency and at times we traveled together to the city for entertainment. I had a Honda 50 that was supplied by Peace Corps when he rode with me on the Honda his garment billowed and decreased our speed and he would then shout over my shoulder shout “put fire to it” .

I may not have understood how profound our friendship was until I was leaving Nigeria from the capital Lagos. As I walked to the plane on the tar mac off to my side behind a chain link fence was Odola and a friend of his. The two had traveled by public transport a day’s trip to wave at me during my departure. Tears there were on both sides of that fence.

I acknowledge the many friends close to home who have contributed to my good fortune.

I value the friends that I traveled to Nicaragua with and the Nicaraguans that hosted us.

Our Meeting and its many members both past and present have inspired and guided my life.

My wife has given me both freedom and loving guidance over the past 50 years.

Joan Baez sings, "I'll show a young man with so many reasons why, there but for poor fortune go you & I" As I think about the men I worship with at Cayuga Correctional I believe that could be true, but for the influence of my friends. I struck upon good fortune.

Hymn: Song of Peace

Benediction

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