

2005 QUERIES AND SELECTED RESPONSES

1. MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Query: Are our meetings for worship held in a spirit of expectant waiting and communion with the Holy Spirit? How do we prepare our hearts and minds for worship?

How do we refer to that which is divine? How does ascribing gender to the Holy Spirit affect our worship?

How do we integrate our daily lives with meeting for worship? Do we seek opportunities for worship outside of meeting?

How does the vocal ministry of the meeting contribute to its spiritual life? In what ways do we recognize and nurture vocal ministry and other spiritual gifts?

Selected Response: Meetings for Worship here are very quiet compared to others Friends have participated in. Some of us tend to edit ourselves, waiting for the right message, or for the right time to give it. Sometimes we settle in so deeply that it is difficult to speak. We have attended worship meetings where Friends seem to speak too easily about what is on their minds or on the news, and we don't want to follow this path. Perhaps in this meeting we are taking too seriously the instruction that we should speak only if we feel God is nudging or pressuring or commanding us to do so. We won't know the exact meaning of our message to each of those present, or the effect our message might have, but we can have faith that God will help the message to be used or not used as it is needed.

People have appreciated spoken ministry from gathered meetings, and have sometimes voiced their appreciation to the speaker. Since we are a small, intimate group, this is naturally an unstructured, spontaneous occurrence rather than a formal procedure by the M&O Committee, as it is in some larger meetings.

Preparing our hearts and minds during the week helps to make our weekly corporate worship richer both in the silence and in the vocal ministry, but many of us feel we don't prepare as we should. One person noted that vocal ministry is more frequent after Yearly Meeting sessions, when many of us have been spending time focused on spiritual matters. One person makes a habit of carrying an exercise or meditation with him during his work day, and believes this deepens his weekly worship experience. One person spoke of her efforts to become more aware of God in the world, seeking guidance more frequently, remembering God every minute and every second as she goes through life. Our daily individual spiritual practices do not replace Sunday worship, which feels like a safe time set aside for the purpose and away from distractions and fear.

We are concerned about passing on our faith to the meeting's children. We want them to have genuine experiences of the Spirit, not just to go through the motions of attending meeting and repeating things we have said. We need to choose our words honestly when talking about our meeting for worship. Instead of calling it "silent" we like the phrases "Spirit-led" or "waiting worship."

2. OUTREACH

Query: Do we encourage intervisitation within the Yearly Meeting and with other Friends?

What are we doing to share our faith with others outside our Friends' community? How do we speak truth as we know it and yet remain open to truth as understood by others?

In what ways do we cooperate with persons and groups with whom we share concerns? How do we reach out to those with whom we disagree?

How do we make the presence of our meeting known to the larger community? Do we invite others to share in our meetings for worship and other meeting activities? Do we welcome everyone and appreciate the gifts that differences such as race, creed, economic status, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation may bring to us?

Selected response: We had a lively and wide-ranging discussion of this advice and query, perhaps reflecting other discussions we've had recently about the vitality and diversity of our meeting.

How do we make the presence of our meeting known to the larger community? Some churches have taken to conducting mass mailings that advertise their "grand openings." Maybe they're on to something—a mass marketing approach can get the word out to busy people with active lives.

Why are we reticent to reach out like that? We don't want to push our beliefs on others. The topic of religion is generally avoided in polite company. Is there a way that we can express our beliefs in social situations without offending others? Perhaps we are overly shy or careful in this area.

It's important to let people in our community know that our meeting exists. If we were to put an ad in the local paper, for example, what would it look like? We suggested that it might be time for us to hold another open house. We have sponsored speakers in the past and extended open invitations to the community, but we've primarily drawn members of the Friends Church. We discussed the possibility of holding our Oxfam Simple Supper as a public and publicized event, as the Paullina Meeting has done for many years. It would offer us an opportunity to open our doors to the wider community. We pointed out that our trustees are looking at ways to spend some of the funds that the meeting will receive from the estates of Bob Berquist and Bob Darby. Should some of those funds be devoted to outreach projects?

The Whittier Meeting recently had a letter to the editor published in *The Gazette*. It seems that someone has repeatedly taken from the meetinghouse property signs that express the meeting's anti-war position. The letter invited that individual or individuals to discuss their objections with the meeting rather than taking their signs. Sometimes, outreach occurs in unexpected ways.

We talked about how some of us have come to Quakerism. One person first encountered Friends as a college student through an older brother's gift that enabled her to experience an AFSC Work Camp. Many misconceptions about Friends exist today among young people. They would benefit from an introduction to Friends and Quakerism.

It's true that we've generally been raised to avoid talking about religion and politics in social settings, but it seems that we should be able to have civil dialogues about our values and beliefs. Perhaps we should concentrate on listening to others' points of view before or rather than explaining our own. By doing so, we could begin to find the common ground that unite us, rather than focusing on the differences that divide us. The simplest things are often the most difficult to do. If we look for that of God in others, if we conduct every encounter in that manner, our lives can serve as powerful statements of our beliefs.

Out of politeness, we sometimes remain silent when others say things that we disagree with or that we believe are wrong. Perhaps we should feel comfortable saying that we don't see things that way. Perhaps it's better to make a comment that offers an alternative to that statement, rather than responding directly and judgmentally to the statement.

One challenge to keeping our meeting vital seems to be the cerebral and meditative nature of our worship experience. Churches that offer a more physical and sensory service might especially appeal to youth. We marvel at the ability of many young people to handle multiple sensory stimuli: listening to music, watching TV, studying, all at the same time. Many people have the mental capacity to manage all that input and perform effectively in a world that often seems to overload us with stimuli. And yet, we noted that we all need a balance in our lives. Many young people relish the opportunity for silence and meditation.

We acknowledged that the traditional Quaker message of simplicity and inwardness seems to conflict with contemporary culture, especially contemporary youth culture. But we also acknowledged that Friends' testimonies on peace and nonviolence, social justice, environmentalism, and communalism have always resonated with youth and their idealism.

In the end, we were left to wonder about and challenge ourselves with much the same question that we began with: How do we make our beliefs and values more widely known?

3. MEETING FOR BUSINESS

Query: How can we hold our meetings for business in the spirit of love, understanding and patient search for unity without becoming frustrated by differences of opinion or the pressures of time?

How do we respond when no one else in the meeting seems to hold the views that we do on an issue? How do we respond to a dissenting minority?

How do we share responsibilities among Friends in our meeting? How do we serve our meetings?

Selected response: We recognize we have difficulty in achieving the goal stated in this query. Pressures of time especially affect our deliberations. However, having much of the work of the meeting processed by committees helps to bring focus to our discussions. And, in the Meeting for Business, items needing processing are often referred to standing and/or special committees. For example, dissatisfaction with having a workday to care for the meetinghouse and grounds was referred to the house committee, which offered an alternative approach which seems to be working better.

Our meetings for business follow worship. After a rich and deep experience in worship it sometimes is a bit difficult to move into a "business mode." The feeling was expressed that having more periods during Meeting for Business for silence/centering might help to make that transition smoother. Our smallness may lead to being a bit "chatty" during conduct of business rather than thoughtful listening with silence between expressions of views. We recognize that, desirably, one is speaking (with respect to business) as prompted by the Spirit. We need to be aware of the need to assist newcomers to learn the purpose of silence during Meeting for Business and that we are doing business out of an attitude of worship. We experience some conflict at times between the method of accomplishing the business of the meeting in a Quaker way contrasted with secular experience in business meetings. We reminded ourselves of the need for patience, listening, focus in the conduct of the business of the meeting.

One person paraphrased Sister Wendy to the effect "Silence helps to break the hold that time has on us" with the thought that it may be helpful to us. Another felt the industrial revolution had betrayed us in that, rather than time being freed up by the marvels of the industrial revolution, we seem to feel busier than ever, contributing to our frustration in dealing with time in general and, in particular, our attitude about time in Meeting for Business.

Since we seem not to have a lot of dissension, the question was raised, "Is that because we are not doing enough (on difficult issues)?" It was pointed out that attendance at Meeting may have an element of self-selection, which minimizes likelihood of differences of views. Sometimes we may feel that facing up to differences of views isn't worth the effort, yet when we reflect more fully we recognize that it is essential to confront differences for the care and health of the Meeting. That calls for honest acknowledgment of differences of view when they exist, patience in dealing with them, and keeping judgment at bay, always acting out of love.

4. HARMONY WITHIN THE MEETING

Query: What can we do to deepen our relationships with one another? How does gender affect the way we relate to each other?

How does our meeting balance the needs for honesty and kindness? What topics do we avoid for the sake of “unity”?

When in conflict with others, do we cultivate a forgiving spirit? Do we look to that of God in ourselves and seek to address that of God in those with whom we disagree?

Selected response: Although some Friends have felt very well supported by the meeting in difficult times and some have not, all agreed that we need to remember to follow up when someone lets us know that they are experiencing a difficult time. Often just seeking that person out during social time can let them know of our caring is helpful. E-mails and phone calls give us a way to find out if more help is needed.

In our meeting, both men and women participate in care giving; it is a joy to see the men playing with the children as well as leading them in activities. The children see men in roles not always associated with fathers.

Lately we have been paying particular attention to drawing the children into the life of the meeting. A recent suggestion to invite the children to the first few minutes of some programs has already borne fruit. The children especially enjoyed seeing pictures of the stories they were hearing, and this fact reminded us that everyone likes pictures. There is no reason why people planning programs, even if only adults are expected to attend, should not consider adding visuals or interactive components. The query discussion, for instance, could be conducted in a different format if the reader so chooses.

When it’s not appropriate for the children to share their First Day School projects at the beginning of the program, perhaps they could be invited to do that during announcement time.

We are often reluctant to stay in touch with inactive (local) members. They receive the newsletter but often don’t get enough personal messages to be assured that we care about them. Ministry and Oversight can lead the way by asking those best connected to contact absent Friends, but we can also encourage other individuals to call and send e-mails.

5. MUTUAL CARE

Query: How do we respond to each other’s personal needs and difficulties in sensitive and useful ways? Do we encourage both men and women to share in care giving?

What are we doing to welcome and draw members and attenders of all ages into the fellowship of the meeting?

How do we help our children feel the loving care of the meeting? What do the children contribute to the meeting?

How do we keep in touch with inactive and distant members and attenders?

Selected Response: We’re open to requests for support, including requests for prayers. Prayer is one form of action, because it can lead to one’s own action. People from the meeting supported Sherry Hutchison and others, who were on trial last spring for crossing the line at the National Guard headquarters, by attending their trial.

Not having a paid minister, sometimes we don't do as well as we should, or may not know about a need. We need to reach out to people in crisis more than we do. We assume the Ministry and Oversight Committee knows everything!

We try to be a network.

Different adults from the meeting could be called on to work with the children. Quiet activity helps them learn ways of Friends. Two children new to our First Day school are a resource to others about the Bible.

The *Friendly Line* is our outreach to distant members and infrequent attenders.

6. EDUCATION

Query: How can we most effectively foster a spirit of inquiry and a loving and understanding attitude toward life?

What effort are we making to become better acquainted with the Bible, the teachings of Jesus, our Judeo-Christian heritage, the history and principles of Friends, and the contributions of other religions and philosophies to our spiritual heritage?

In what ways can we encourage an educational process that is consistent with the values Friends cherish? How do gender based expectations affect the goals we set and the way we learn?

Do we take an active and supportive interest in schools, libraries and other educational resources in our communities and elsewhere?

How do we prepare ourselves and our children to play active roles in a changing world?

Selected response: We moved slowly into the discussion of the Advice and Query on Education, considering various ways in which we try to live our values in this area. It was not difficult to see that many of us are active as parents and citizens in our local public schools, that we are working to strengthen our relationship with Scattergood Friends School (a process, we noted, which results in their giving to us also), and that some of us have been active with the local television program, "Conversations," which focuses on issues of peace and justice and involves high school students in the production of the show. The Library Committee is glad to report that the library is being well used.

We recognized that the spirit of inquiry that the advice suggests we foster is a natural trait in our young children. Early in their development, our work may largely be to step out of the way to effectively enjoy, and avoid squelching that natural inquisitiveness. As children grow, we ruefully agreed, their spirit of inquiry can lead them to places we prefer them not to go. Guidance always has its place. We remember that, not uncommonly, adults too can use guidance.

As we considered how central it is to our Quaker beliefs to teach by living our testimonies, we encountered the tension that exists between teaching by example and the need to sometimes articulate our values to our young people. Friends shared doubts about not having been clear enough with their children about the reasons behind their decision to live simply. We are perhaps reticent about talking about why we choose the way we live. We also remembered that our young people are astute in their understanding of our values, spoken or not, and that we respect and trust them as they move into adulthood. Implicit Quaker values may teach our young people how to consider who they wish to become. We must release them with grace as they find their own ways with the world, remembering that as we have found our own paths, so shall they.

It became apparent in our discussion that we especially search for ways to teach simplicity, and that we are not sure we have been successful. It helped us when a Friend reminded us that the complications

in our lives can interfere with our awareness of the presence of God. A simple life better enables us to be in harmony with the Spirit. We were grateful also for the reminder of one Friend that God's love and generosity are in great abundance everywhere around us, and that our search for simplicity needs to focus on that very abundance, not simply on our response to materialism. We strive for simplicity within the experience of God's abundance.

7. HOME AND FAMILY

Query: How can we make our homes places of love and hospitality? What different expectations do we hold for women and men, boys

and girls? How can we bring more equality into our relationships? How do we develop and maintain lines of communication?

In what ways do we share our deepest experiences, struggles, concerns and beliefs with our children and others, yet encourage them to develop their potential as the Spirit leads them?

What place do we make in our daily lives for meditation, spiritual renewal and reading of inspiring literature, such as the Bible?

How does our meeting support families of all kinds?

Selected response: Relationships with those closest to us can often be a dance between sharing ourselves with, and imposing ourselves on, a person. It is not always easy to find ways to help a person to follow his or her own leadings. Being open about letting a person know they can follow their own instincts can help a lot, but may be just a start.

As we move from childhood to being adults, then parents, and eventually seniors, role reversals take place. We have the full range of generations in our meeting. Those of us who are parents worry over our teens and our own parents, neither of whom want to be worried over quite so much. How do we balance between reaching out and intruding in our intergenerational relationships? Separations can occur within families. There are many reasons for this, including missed opportunities and misunderstandings in our expressions of concern for one another. Other issues can arise within families. Two that we spoke of include difficulties with mental health and differences in faith choices within families. Dealing with family members who have chosen fundamentalist views on faith raises difficult issues that are often easiest to simply avoid speaking about.

Openness is a key to any relationship, and within families we need to be aware of the need to ask questions that can encourage sharing of our joys and apprehensions. These do not always have to be initiated in face-to-face conversations, but e-mails and writing things down for later sharing can be helpful, allowing one to respond (or not respond) in a way and a timing of his/her choosing.

Family does not have to have a narrow definition. Jesus encourages us to look at the wider world as being more important than family. In our own experience we know that the kindness of a stranger can sometimes have more meaning than that of a family member. A society or community focused on family can become closed to newcomers. So it is healthier to have a broader definition of family. Family can be a source of considerable pain, especially when relationships and/or health falter. These issues can make it difficult to embrace a wider world view at times. The opportunity to share our personal issues can help us keep them in perspective with the wider world.

Communication is critical to recognizing the needs of others and responding to them. We discussed how we might create greater opportunities for this in the life of our meeting. Making time in the face of schedules and busy-ness is difficult, but what choice do we have if we are to provide opportunities to discuss things that are most important and/or difficult? We will make an effort to have a mutual sharing

during our frugals, allowing each person in attendance an opportunity to discuss what is happening in their life. More frequent frugals and reading groups were also suggested, and we will hope to move in this direction in the life of our meeting.

Children's response:

We are influenced by our families. They are always there for us, no matter what. We get our ideas from our family. How they raise us shapes us. Our names come from our family and we learn language from them too.

We like being a part of our family. We laugh with our families. They care about us. They provide food, shelter, give us advice and accept us for who we are. We are happy to be part of each other. Sometimes things are so busy we would like to be a bigger part of their lives.

Sometimes we do not appreciate our family though. They can embarrass us. Sometimes they care too much. There are rules and things seem too controlling sometimes. Not all the advice we get is welcome, and we are not always understood. Siblings can get annoying sometimes too.

We learn to help people by being in a family. These lessons can be chores, giving advice, caring for our family and going to them with our problems. We help people communicate and learn to explain things to people that are not always easy to talk about.

Being in a Quaker family is different from other families. We do not stress out about what we wear to worship. There is an emphasis on peace. Our prayers before meals are silent, not spoken. We learn to respect each other as equals and are sure not to be violent.

There is love in our families. We know this because they care for and take care of us. We laugh together. We have things explained to us. We get treats and privileges from our parents. We are told we are loved. We are comforted. Someone is always asking for a hug.

God speaks to us about our family from the silence. Our family is important to us. Our siblings and parents are people just like us. We can be relaxed around our families because they accept us. Even though you wonder what they are thinking sometimes, you realize how much you love them. Our family is a part of us. We are most grateful for them.

8. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Query: How do we center our lives in the awareness of God the Spirit, so that all things may take their rightful places?

How do we structure our individual lives in order to keep them uncluttered with things and activities?
How does Meeting help us examine our personal lives for simplicity?

Do we choose recreational activities which foster mental, physical and spiritual health?

How are our lives affected by tobacco, alcohol and drug use? What can we do to deal with problems resulting from their use? What can we do to recognize and deal with unhealthy ways we treat ourselves?

How do we ensure that we act with fairness and integrity?

Are we sensitive to our own use of language which may be offensive or oppressive to others?

Selected response: The meaning of simplicity is reflected in our desire to reduce our attraction to, and dependence on, modern technology such as computers, cell phones, and other aspects of mass media culture. We strive to disconnect with external distractions and connect with the inner peace and light that we have come to cherish within our meeting community.

Although many of us acknowledge the usefulness of setting priorities and creating daily lists, the importance and desire to leave the time and space for life to flow naturally allows us the awareness and recognition of that preciousness of each moment.

We often feel a hopelessness and dismay when we confront the entrenched power of corporate, military, or political interests. The use of humor, satire or irony is often the most effective means of speaking truth to power. We affirm the gift of laughter as a means to lighten the spirit and as a reminder that the source of joy can be found in our continual seeking along our personal and corporate journey.

9. CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Query: What conflicts do we perceive between the laws of the State and our religious convictions? How do we resolve those conflicts in our lives? In what ways do we assume responsibility for the government of our community, state, nation and world?

How do we share our convictions with others? Do we express our opinions with courage, yet with love, mindful of the Divine Spirit within everyone?

How do we maintain our integrity when we find ourselves in a position of power? How do we respond when we feel powerless? Do we really respect and help those we seek to serve?

Are we careful to reach our decision through prayer and strengthen our actions with worship? Are we open to divine leadings?

Selected response: We are deeply concerned about our national government's emphasis on a military response to many forms of terrorism and international issues. We find it difficult to truly find the truth about many situations when the administration seems to declare lies or misinterpretations as fact and the media seems to only promote false impressions through their reporting. The emphasis on spinning the facts of a situation to suit a specific agenda pervades our society today in many areas besides the government, although it seems to be most often used in that context. There are so many areas with which we feel alarm and concern because of state and national policy decisions that we often feel overwhelmed and discouraged. We struggle to find constructive ways of speaking our truths that will be understood by both the public and our legislators. Many of us seek alternative sources of information to the popular press in order to try to discern the truth of a situation. Some of us contact legislators and contribute editorials and letters to the editor on a regular basis, while others call or e-mail on specific issues of concern which arise when alerted by FCNL and other organizations.

We are concerned about the lack of trust in our fellow citizens and the unwillingness to work together with those who hold different points of view in order to find a truth both can support. The pervasive atmosphere of mistrust and confrontation keeps individuals polarized and fearful. We regret that there is no orderly public debate of issues that concern all of us, including the rest of the world, but only acrimony and dispute, with no recognition that there are as many different truths as there are individuals. It is up to all of us to find reconciliation of those differing truths.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Query: What are we doing about our disproportionate use of the world's resources?

Do we see unreasonable exploitation in our relationship with the rest of creation? How can we nurture reverence and respect for life? How can we become more fully aware of our interdependent relationship with the rest of creation?

To what extent are we aware of all life and the role we play? What can we do in our own lives and communities to address environmental concerns?

Selected response: We have the challenge of endeavoring to live in tune with all of creation and to endeavor to be kind and considerate of all creatures.

Credit cards make us concerned about the increased spending and materialism that they encourage. We are concerned about fuel economy for our vehicles and the need for new alternatives. Determining the best type of energy for transportation is a puzzle for those of us in rural areas. The food packaging currently being used tends to waste lots of materials. We find it helpful when friends share their knowledge and ideas on how to lower our contribution to the waste problems. Global warming raises questions as to what one can do individually.

We believe it best to think before we act. Sharing information and resources can cut down our disproportionate use of resources. It is helpful to pay attention to legislation being proposed and being voted on.

The problems and challenges that confront our environment often result in a forlorn or cynical outlook. Perhaps this cynicism can be overcome with a more spiritual or saintly passion that counters being naive with education and awareness. The balance that we seek can only be measured by the depth of our love for the environment and our capacity for hope.

11. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Query: How are we beneficiaries of inequity and exploitation? How are we victims of inequity and exploitation? In what ways can we address these problems?

What can we do to improve the conditions in our correctional institutions and to address the mental and social problems of those confined there?

How can we improve our understanding of those who are driven to violence by subjection to racial, economic or political injustice? In what ways do we oppose prejudice and injustice based on gender, sexual orientation, class, race, age, and physical, mental and emotional conditions? How would individuals benefit from a society that values everyone? How would society benefit?

Selected response: In a wealthy country like the United States, we benefit from the cheap labor provided by the world's poor, who manufacture much of our clothing and other products. We noted a particular concern with the importation of raw materials, including and especially, oil from abroad, a situation that puts the greatest burden of work on citizens of those countries for the least portion of the profit. Most of us in this meeting could find no specific ways in which we were the victims of inequity.

We felt that we could address some of these problems by paying attention to our purchases. We can purchase products such as coffee and clothing from fair trade companies, and buy the bulk of our groceries from local suppliers. We can also purchase clothing and household goods from thrift shops that use their proceeds to help others.

One note that grew out of our discussion was many people's lack of health insurance, which often causes them to use expensive services such as ambulances and emergency rooms because they do not have to pay in advance of treatment, and often because they wait until they are *in extremis* to seek health care. We noted that a consequence of this is more expensive health care for everyone, and wondered if a charitable fund to pay for rides for indigent patients to see doctors and hospitals might help alleviate some of this problem.

We noted that one big problem with people in prison is that they often have difficulty returning to life on the outside. People may get out of prison only to be called back in for crimes committed prior to their

entering prison, but which have remained tangled in the courts. As a society we also tend to continue to punish ex-prisoners, as though we are not content that they have paid their debts. It is difficult for ex-prisoners to find homes and employment. Programs designed to support people while they return to society will help.

With prisons, we noted the extreme inequity and cruelty of the death penalty in all of the different ways it is practiced. We also noted that prison guards are often both the victims and perpetrators of violence in the prison system. Guards who are treated badly by their bosses and other guards will tend to take out their frustration on prisoners.

One way we can oppose prejudice and injustice is by making sure that our leaders know we don't approve of treating people like they are less than people. Any of us can write a letter to the editor or write our local congresspersons. This is especially important if we live where the prevailing opinion seems to be one that supports unjust attitudes. We can support legislation that prevents discrimination against our GLBT neighbors in areas like housing, employment, and family life.

People benefit from a society that values everyone in many ways. One of the most important is that each of us is, or potentially will be, in a category that gets short shrift. Any of us could become disabled or have a GLBT family member, and all of us, if we live long enough, will grow old. Society benefits from equity because it keeps us from wasting people's gifts, and it prevents the kind of resentment that builds until it can lead to violence.

12. PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

Query: What are we doing to education ourselves and others about the causes of conflict in our own lives, our families and our meetings? Do we provide refuge and assistance, including advocacy, for spouses, children, or elderly persons who are victims of violence or neglect?

Do we recognize that we can be perpetrators as well as victims of violence? How do we deal with this? How can we support one another so that healing may take place?

What are we doing to understand the causes of war and violence and to work toward peaceful settlement of differences locally, nationally, and internationally? How do we support institutions and organizations that promote peace?

Do we faithfully maintain our testimony against preparation for and participation in war?

Selected response: It is always reassuring to get together with people of like mind, who need the support of each other. In particular when we represent a minority point of view. There was a Friends Journal article that spoke about non-violence training, suggesting that if you are able to get your attacker to help you, enlist their help, it can transform the situation. None of us has had the intense kind of experience that the woman spoke of in the article.

It can be a difficult thing to maintain a consistent testimony against war, since we live in such a violent country—there is so much anger and polarization, related to various cultural, religious, economic ways of thinking and being. War tax resistance is not an easy choice since it involves putting oneself at risk financially and in a social sense. It is also a difficult choice to live in such a way that one does not pay taxes, meaning living “closer to the edge”, but there is also satisfaction in not having to pay money for war making.

Bumper stickers are not enough. One parent spoke about their child having conflicts with another sixth grader, and picking out the good things about that person, to remember when the inevitable difficult time to be around them occurred. With our youth, we talk about not using words that hurt.

It seems clear that, in this country and the world, we will eventually have conflicts over water and food. It is not clear why decision makers think they are providing a safer, more stable, more secure country.

Even the poorest of the poor in this country are not as impoverished as in much of the rest of the world. Conditions of this kind of economic disparity promote much anger and result in many conflicts.

At the college, there is a wide range of economic backgrounds; no negative connotations (with any particular economic class) that one student has observed. At one time or another, many of the issues bubble up in the form of chalk wars (on the sidewalks).

We think it is a good idea to change consumer habits, but aren't sure if it is possible to change so that we don't purchase or consume things made by sweatshops or slave labor. Buying locally grown food supports local growers. It takes time and effort to send a letter to someone to let them know that you didn't buy their product because of their labor practices