

**Worship and Action for Peace**  
**March 13, 2006**

“The most important [commandment],” answered Jesus, “is this:  
‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.  
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul and with all your mind  
and with all your strength.’  
The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’  
There is no commandment greater than these.”  
(Mark 12:29–31 (NIV))

Dear Friends,

On Friday, March 10th, we learned that the body of Tom Fox of Langley Hill Monthly Meeting had been found in Baghdad. Friend Tom was one of four members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq taken captive in November.

In a press conference on Saturday, Langley Hill Friends spoke their love of Tom and their sense of loss at his passing. They spoke also their deep commitment to uphold and continue the work in which Tom was so courageously engaged.

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STATEMENT OF LANGLEY HILL FRIENDS MEETING ON THE DEATH  
OF OUR FRIEND, TOM FOX, IN IRAQ  
McLean, Virginia, 3/11/06

Langley Hill Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) mourns the passing of our beloved member Tom Fox. In the months since the kidnapping of the four members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, we have held Tom, his fellow captives, and their captors in our prayers. We express our deepest wish that the kidnappers will release Norman, Jim, and Harmeet unharmed so that they may return safely to their families, and continue the work of peace and understanding that CPT was undertaking in Iraq.

Tom was a member of our faith community for over 15 years. He was a former Clerk (lay leader) of the Meeting, and loved working with children and young people. When he last returned from Baghdad in the summer of 2005, he spent time serving as head cook at a Quaker camp near Winchester. His death is especially hard on the children who knew and loved him. We express our love and concern for them, and particularly for Tom’s own children who grew up in our Meeting.

In a statement of conviction Tom wrote in October 2004, he said “We

reject violence to punish anyone who harms us. We ask for equal justice in the arrest and trial of anyone, soldier or civilian, who commits an act of violence, and we ask that there be no retaliation on their relatives or property. We forgive those who consider us their enemies. Therefore, any penalty should be in the spirit of restorative justice, rather than in the form of violent retribution.”

It was an act of courage for Tom to travel to Iraq, to live in an ordinary Baghdad neighborhood, and to try to give voice to the concerns of ordinary people with friends and family members held in prison, out of sight, and with no avenue for communication.

The loss of Tom is personal to those of us at Langley Hill who knew and loved him. We need to remember that personal loss has also happened to thousands of Iraqis— indeed to tens of thousands of families around the world— who have lost loved ones in acts of violence just in the past year. Tom’s story is being shared widely; the stories of these other losses have not been. We at Langley Hill will honor Tom’s courage by ensuring that the work to which he was dedicated continues, and that all the stories of loss— not just Langley Hill’s— are told.

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Echoing Langley Hill Friends’ sentiments, Christian Peacemaker Teams issued a statement expressing their grief at Tom’s death, and also their continued commitment to nonviolent witness (<http://www.cpt.org/iraq/response/06-10-03statement.htm>):

In grief we tremble before God who wraps us with compassion. The death of our beloved colleague and friend pierces us with pain.... We mourn the loss of Tom Fox who combined a lightness of spirit, a firm opposition to all oppression, and the recognition of God in everyone....

Even as we grieve the loss of our beloved colleague, we stand in the light of his strong witness to the power of love and the courage of nonviolence. That light reveals the way out of fear and grief and war....

Let us all join our voices on behalf of those who continue to suffer under occupation, whose loved ones have been killed or are missing. In so doing, we may hasten the day when both those who are wrongly detained and those who bear arms will return safely to their homes. In such a peace we will find solace for our grief.

Tom’s single-minded desire and commitment to live out the gospel message is

both inspiring and deeply challenging. During his time in Iraq, he maintained a web blog (<http://waitinginthelight.blogspot.com/>) where he shared his experiences, observations, and reflections in the midst of continual war and killing. In a piece posted on August 30, 2005, entitled "This Sad Wearing Away of the Heart," Tom wrote of the corrosive risk to the soul of disasters natural and human-made. He asked:

Is there something in life that will fill this vacuum and prevent this sad wearing away of the heart? I have no idea but I do know that my heart feels differently when I consider the unknowable realms of disease and natural disaster compared to the man-made disasters that bring about death and destruction....

The only "something in my life" I can hold onto is to do what little I can to bring about the creation of the Peaceable Realm of God. It is my sense that such a realm will always have natural disasters. It is the "man-made" disasters that we are called upon to bring to an end.

Tom was called to accompany those who suffer under occupation in a way that willingly risked life for love. His work embodied his response to Jesus' admonitions that we "love our enemies" and "resist not evil with evil." The news of Tom's life and passing calls each of us to examine his or her life for evidence of faithful walking in the Light. Such radical faithfulness is not for the faint of heart.

In the Fellowship of Peace,

Worship & Action for Peace Working Group,  
Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer, Lu Harper

We are called to that obedience which freely gives up self, possessions, life, beliefs, in following that vision, that greater love in which alone is life and peace. This does not mean that we lie down like doormats to be trampled on, or that we give up our freedom or our grasp of truth--it means that we join ourselves to the risk of creation, to the venture of authentic human being, that we 'stand in the Light,' reveal that measure of truth that is known to us . . . that we face the pain of the world, and match it with forgiveness.

Janet Scott, "What Canst Thou Say" (Swarthmore Lecture, Friends Home Service, 1980)

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they

put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5: 14–16 (NIV)