

## Worship and Action Update, 4/18/03

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

Could there have been any more absolute experience of despondency than the disciples at the crucifixion? Their movement appeared to be bleeding out on the cross. They all, in one way or another, had to face the guilt and humiliation of having been overcome with fear and disowning their faith. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "A man who won't die for something is not fit to live." And the disciples each had elected not to risk dying for their covenant of love. No wonder that Mark reports (15:33): "At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour."

And could there have been any more absolute experience of ecstasy than the disciples discovering that their faith lived anew? Whether in their communion of mourning, or in shared confessions and testimonies, or in a common vision of continued hope made palpable, as on the road to Emmaus, a light that had seemed extinguished became again a beacon to a spirit community. Even more, a gaggle of followers now found the melody of their own voices and the strength to seek revelation, to publish truth, and to witness God's love. They experienced Jesus' promise that "the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

Over the past nine months, Friends have felt and seen and experienced much in responding to a "call to pray and work for peace." New lessons have been learned. Old knowledge has been remembered, refreshed, and reaffirmed. As we celebrate defining events in our spiritual heritage, we may take time to reflect on what has and has not been accomplished, on what we have learned, on what can be improved upon, and on the distance we have come and the roads we might travel in the future. How will Friends move forward with the Spirit in locally based activity, grounded in worship and care, in collaborative efforts and interfaith cooperation, in networking with a concern for peace of Friends and others around the world? How are we manifesting the peace that passeth understanding? We invite Friends to share their reflections, plans and hopes, so that they may be shared with Friends throughout New York Yearly Meeting.

Friends continue to explore our peace testimony. Last weekend, April 11-13, Rochester Friends enjoyed the opportunity to look at the Quaker Peace Testimony with Chuck Fager. Lu Harper provides a report:

"Between 33 and 35 families attended all or part of the workshop. We looked first at the complete 1660 statement in its biblical and historical context. We then considered the historical record to see the individual conscientious differences among Friends in upholding the Peace Testimony during times of peril, focusing upon American Friends during the Civil War, and British Friends during World War I. We also looked at the disownment of Friends who served in the military during these conflicts, and the differing practices among meetings at different times in the conflicts. Friends came away with a more nuanced understanding of this testimony, and of the interrelationships between the care we extend to

each other as members of a community, the discernment process, and the weight of Friends tradition.”

On Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Friends and visitors will gather again at Purchase Meeting for the third session of the study series on nonviolent civil disobedience, to explore the legal considerations with John Humphries of Hartford Monthly Meeting (New England Yearly Meeting) and Fred Dettmer of Purchase Meeting.

Friends continue to uphold our witness for alternatives to war on Iraq. Earlier this month, the Canadian Friends Service Committee issued an action alert asking Friends in Canada and abroad, and the Quaker service agencies, to write a short letter of support for Canada’s decision to stay out of the war to Canada’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. The entire Action Alert can be found at CFSC’s Web site at [http://cfsc.quaker.ca/statements/CFSC-Keep\\_Canada\\_out\\_of\\_the\\_War.pdf](http://cfsc.quaker.ca/statements/CFSC-Keep_Canada_out_of_the_War.pdf)

The American Friends Service Committee continues to update weekly its alternative information Web site, “The Human Face of War,” which focuses on the humanitarian crisis caused by the war on Iraq. The site relies on first-person accounts of the situation, emphasizes the direct experiences of individuals and families, and provides information on the nature and scope of the humanitarian crisis. Go to [www.afsc.org/human-face](http://www.afsc.org/human-face).

And Friends continue to explore ways in which we can give life to our peace testimony. This week, the Friends Committee on National Legislation asks: “What do we do now?” and offers the following thoughts:

“We keep on keeping on. We build on the very real successes and accomplishments of our efforts to prevent the war in Iraq. Those efforts identified literally millions of new volunteers for the peace and justice movement.... We now refine our efforts to inform and organize those millions of concerned citizens. We all work together to prevent the next battle of the Bush Administration’s endless war, be it Syria, Iran, North Korea, or another country. We elect a new Congress in 2004 by registering millions more voters and by getting them to vote.... We the people take back and protect our inalienable rights as citizens by exercising those rights in public protest. And we convince Congress that ‘War Is Not the Answer’ in time to save the world from our civilian leaders’ military madness....

The times are tough. But, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, ‘The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward Justice....’ At this moment the new, broad, mainstream movement for peace and justice has a job to do. We have to construct a new section of that moral arc of the universe that will put us on the pathway from here to a world free of war or the threat of war. We may not get there, but our children or our children’s children could.”

In this Easter season of a world blooming anew, the final words attributed to Jesus by Matthew (28:20) continue to resonate: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Peaceable Greetings,

*Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer  
NYYM Worship & Action working group*

*“Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”*

Martin Luther King Jr.