

Worship and Action Update, August 22, 2003

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

Grounded in shared worship, we experience fresh guidance and inward power to act.(1)
[Numbered notes are at the close of the Update.]

At this turn in our year, we resume familiar patterns or begin to learn new ones. We wish one another well as we return to school, start new jobs, move house. Some among us continue their search for employment, direction, endurance through pain and loss and upheaval. September 11 approaches: will we join Families for Peaceful Tomorrows in Circles of Hope (vigils) or Discussion Circles?(2) The World Trade Organization is to meet in Cancún, Mexico, September 10 - 14: should we understand what is at issue? Why is India balking at preliminary farm subsidy agreements?(3) Rochester Monthly Meeting plans a one-day retreat in September on right use of resources and a weekend training in October on nonviolence---Friends in Rochester are asking one another to plan ahead and register now.

We are choosing every moment. We put ourselves in the path of some experiences, others become very unlikely.

Further, what information we take in feeds--or starves--our experience of the world. Friends have expressed concern over getting trustworthy news. But what is news? Barbara Kingsolver writes that viewers of television news "are lured into assuming, at least subconsciously, that this 'news' is a random sampling of everything that happened on planet earth that day, and so represents reality. . . . Not true, not *remotely* true. The world, a much wider place than seventeen inches, includes songbird migration, emphysema, pollinating insects, the Krebs cycle, my neighbor who recycles knitting-factory scraps to make quilts, natural selection, the Loess Hills of Iowa, and a trillion other things outside the notice of CNN. Are they important? Everything on that list I just tossed off is life or death to somebody somewhere, half of them are life and death to you and me"(4)

Often our choices reinforce unexamined preferences or assumptions. The New York Times and the Guardian both report news from the Middle East, but with different choices in coverage which evoke different understandings of power and responsibility. We choose to read the New York Times, or the Guardian, or both, or neither. One Friend during this last week asked *why* we would call attention to a Palestinian's call for nonviolence(5), and indeed asked us to look more deeply into why nonviolence is important to us.

We decide whether to write notes, make casseroles, chain ourselves to chain link fences, go to midweek meeting for worship, fill out another application, meet a new person, go for a walk. Paying attention is our worship. One Friend said this week, "I open myself as fully and completely as I can, waiting and looking for the Spirit. When I catch a glimpse, I turn toward it, never giving a thought to what I leave."

Together, we could uphold one another in paying attention; we could choose and be upheld in our experience.

Do we uphold one another? Are we grounded in shared worship? Are we waiting on God? Are we prepared to experience great inward power to act?

In care,

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

1. We said this when we called one another "to sustained practice of shared worship and action for peace" (New York Yearly Meeting in session 7/26/02, minute #61).
2. Information at www.peacefultomorrow.org
3. A background article by Joseph Stiglitz is available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1019171,00.html>
4. From "The One-Eyed Monster, and Why I Don't Let Him In," *Small Wonder*, New York, 2002, p. 138f.
5. In "The Time Has Come for the Mandela Alternative," Samir Rantisi, coordinator of the Palestinian Peace Coalition, argues that the possibilities of nonviolent Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation have been sabotaged by Israeli excess and Palestinian impatience, among other factors. He relates his experience of confounding Israeli soldiers by chaining himself to a light post in front of Israeli military offices in Beit Eil amid banners demanding Israel withdraw from the lands occupied in 1967. He pleads for a nonviolent approach, writing that nonviolent resistance "is capable of transforming the Palestinian struggle against occupation to a peaceful protest movement and will enable it to enjoy the largest possible international support and assistance."

The article is part of a series of views on nonviolence published in partnership with the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be found on the Web at <http://www.amin.org/eng/uncat/2003/aug/aug17.html>.

The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net,
and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land.
We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in

--Francis Howgill, in Edward Burrough,
The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder, 1672
New York Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, p. 29

There is that near you which will guide you; O! wait for it and be sure
ye keep to it
Isaac Penington, Letter to the Women Friends That Meet at Armscot
in Worcestershire, 1678