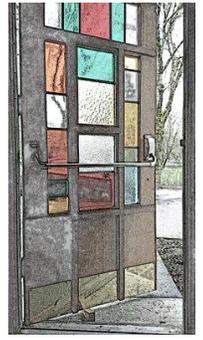


Thresholds

Opening Doorways to Connection, Clarity, and Transformation



West Hills Friends Church

www.westhillsfriends.org

503-246-7654

Events

Wed, Jan 4, 6-8 pm

High School Youth group

Thurs, Jan 5, 10-3

Come In From the Storm, Peg Edera's home. Details, page 3.

Mon, Jan 9, 11-12:30

Biblical Tensions and Toddler Chaos

Tues, Jan 10, 6-8 pm

Middle School Youth Group

Wed, Jan 11, 7-8:30 pm

Worship gathering with worship sharing

Thurs, Jan 12, 10-3

Come In From the Storm, at Peg's

Wed, Jan 18, 6-8 pm

High School Youth Group

Sun, Jan 15

Minding the Light deadline and Business Meeting

Thurs, Jan 19, 10-3

Come In From the Storm, at Peg's

Tues, Jan 24, 6-8

Middle School Youth Group

Wed, Jan 25, 7-8:30 pm

Worship gathering with Taizé chant

Sat, Jan 28, 10-12

InterPlay, WHF Community Bldg

Sat, Jan 28, 10-3

Come In From the Storm, at Peg's

Sun, Jan 29, after worship

Potluck

Tues, Jan 31, 6:30-7:30

Youth Group Starbucks and Quakers



Photo by Graci Huber: "Forest Spirit"

Artist's Statement: Life is thriving in coexistence here, where everything is interconnected in an oasis of harmony. May the microcosmos of our bodies and communities learn from this ever-transitioning balance the forest creates.

Peace Month: Hope in the Midst of Climate Change

- January 1 Message by Mike Huber
- January 8 Message by Peter Illyn
- First Word by Kay Ellison
- Environmental Fair
- Ye Olde Fair Trader
- Kindling Conversation: Environmental Panel
- January 15 First Word by Julie Peyton
- Message by Mike Huber
- January 22 First Word by Wilbur Wood
- Message by Elaine Stewart

[More on page 3](#)

Youth Group News: A Visit to the Oregon Food Bank

by Mark Pratt-Russum

On Tuesday, December 6th, several teens from the youth group went to the Oregon Food Bank to volunteer their time towards helping hungry families. We arrived at the North Portland facility on the heels of the first of the December winter storms. Weather was already making an impact in the gorge. A truck full of pears was scheduled to arrive at the facility, but ice in Hood River meant the truck never left the dock. For that reason, our total time at OFB was shorter than anticipated. Still, we packed red onions into mesh bags that would be distributed later that month. One of the coordinators at the OFB decided to play their favorite 80s' hair metal playlist, which was a great opportunity to introduce the youth group to Guns N' Roses, KISS, and Poison. Thanks to Jill Townley for joining me on this trip as a chaperone!



If you want more information about youth group, please speak to Mark Pratt-Russum, or email: mark-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org

Who's Who at West Hills Friends: Leaders, Committees, and Groups			
Pastor:	Mike Huber: mike-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org	Kitchen Coordinator:	Rachel Hampton
Pastor (Youth):	Mark Pratt-Russum: mark-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org	Music:	Jim Nail
Presiding Clerk:	Doreen Crail	Newsletter:	Mark Pratt-Russum
Recording Clerk:	Dover Norris-York	Nominating:	Margie Simmons
Treasurer:	Mitch Bixby	NWYM reps:	Julie Peyton, Keri Kimberly
Elders:	Keri Kimberly (Clerk), Jayne Calkins, April Vanderwal	Pastoral Care:	Mike Huber
Ushers:	Mark Guenther	Peace Concerns:	Kay Ellison
Decorations:	Kara Romero	Retreat:	Tim Crail
Directory:	Sally Gillette	Story Committee:	Sally Gillette
Earth Care:	Julie Peyton	Stewardship:	Frank Verhoorn
Hunger Concerns:	Dana Hawkins	Social:	Dover Norris-York
		Traveling Ministry:	Jen Seamans and Terri Beardsley

Peace, continued from page 1

Peter Ilyn is Founder and Executive Director of Restoring Eden, an NGO located in Vancouver, WA. Since the early 1990s Peter has advocated environmental stewardship based on a faith perspective.

Elaine Stewart conducts habitat restoration projects on public lands in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties as part of Metro's conservation program. Her projects encompass nearly every ecosystem in the lower Willamette Valley and include rare plant and wildlife protection. Elaine has been at Metro for more than 20 years and has attended West Hills Friends for more than 16 years. Why WHF? "You had me at Evolution Sunday."

The **Environmental Fair and Panel** will include representatives of a number of local groups working on environmental justice. Among them are pdx350, Supporters of Standing Rock, and Northwest Earth Institute.

Report on the Called Meeting of WHF Representatives, December 9-10

The Elders of NW Yearly Meeting were led to "release" WHF from the Yearly Meeting in July, 2015. Since that time, the Yearly Meeting has been divided over how to proceed.

The NWYM Representatives and appointed youth met Friday-Saturday, Dec. 9-10, for a called meeting for continued discernment.

Threshing sessions were guided by questions supplied by the Administrative Council of the Yearly Meeting:

- What might be the outcomes of an overturning of the Elders' decision?
- What might be the outcomes if the Elders' decision stands?
- What might be the outcomes of not coming to a decision?

It was stated that either overturning the YM Elders' decision *or* allowing the Elders' decision to stand might lead to a split in the Yearly Meeting. Concern was expressed around people in disagreement laying aside their biases when listening and seeking unity. Friends agreed that we want the Holy Spirit to guide us and speak through us. Some people asked that the *Faith and Practice* be followed as it is written, while others stated that the *Faith and Practice* is a living document that could be changed to better reflect the differing views in the NWYM. There were Representatives speaking for patience, while others demanded expediency. A few voices identified this as a civil rights issue. [More on page 5](#)

Kindling Conversations

By Mark Pratt-Russum

Creating space for conversations has never been easier. Many of us can log on to Facebook and within seconds be involved in a conversation. Twitter allows us to participate in brief conversations. Our teenagers utilize group chat functions on their phones, engaging in real-time conversations with various groups of friends. The opportunities for being involved in conversations are numerous, but what about the conversations we have with people where we share the same physical space?

When Kindling Conversations was created, the idea made me excited. What if we took many of the conversations already happening online and made them embodied in our physical space? How might the conversation be different?

Kindling Conversations take place on the first Sunday of each month from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Typically, we invite a speaker to share for 20-25 minutes, allowing the rest of the time for questions, comments, and discussion. Sometimes, instead of a speaker, we watch a video clip or two, or we listen to twenty minutes of audio from a podcast. Regardless, that time is designed as the "kindling." It helps get things going and allows us to enter into our own reflections on the topic.

Over the years, we have considered topics including the dark side of Quakerism, the slow-church movement, the neurology of focus/attention in the digital age, institutional vs. distributed trust, prayer, white privilege/supremacy, and the connections between dreams and spirituality. I left all of those conversations energized by all the new ideas and thoughts circulating in my head. This feels like a gift. [More on page 5](#)

Come In From the Storm

By Peg Edera

The New Year begins. We wonder what lies ahead. The weather is cold and grey. It's a good time to take a break, to pause, to stand quiet in the chaos.

On Thursdays, January 5, 12, 19, and Saturday, January 28, Peg Edera is opening her house for retreat, refuge, and respite. From 10 to 3 each day, come enter into a quiet time of meditation, prayer, writing, and reflection. You can come to any or all of the days, and you can use the time as you need.

Each day a special guest will lead us in art, movement, collage, or singing for an hour. On the 5th, artist and sculptor Meg McHutchinson will offer an art experience. The 9th will feature teacher Kathy Albert leading us in Tai Chi movement. On the 19th, Val Hornburg will facilitate SoulCollage® with us, and on the 28th, Ruba Byrd will return from John Day to sing with us.

No experience is required for any of these activities, and participation is optional. There is space available for silent retreat throughout the day. The afternoons will be open for the quiet pursuits of retreat and reflection. The day and the space are flexible. Come for the day you need. Contact Peg at pegedera-at-gmail-dot-com for details or if you have questions.

On the Threshold of 2017: Reflecting on *Thresholds*

By Chris Durost

About a year ago, Mark P-R put out the call for people to help start a newsletter for WHF. Our first issue was published in April 2016. I've been involved with *Thresholds* since the first issue, primarily doing editing and layout, with a little writing here and there. As we step through the door into 2017, I want to come out from my behind-the-scenes role and to reflect on some of my experiences. As a person who had only been coming to WHF for a few months when I joined this effort, I find that I've learned a lot.

I've learned about several of the groups and committees that carry out the work of this community, including the Stewards, the Nominating Committee, the Music Committee, Welcoming Ways, and the Peace Committee (as well as the Newsletter Committee, of course!). I feel fortunate to have connected with a place where I can contribute. Have you? Is there a group you'd like to know more about?

I've gained a lot of clarity about the NW Yearly Meeting and our challenging, ambivalent relationship to it, and in the process, I've learned how much this community values and honors relationships, even when they are difficult.

I've learned that this community is full of creative, interesting, and passionate people – writers, musicians, artists, scientists, activists, educators, and more. Would you like to share an interest, a poem, a photo or artwork, a tattoo, a personal experience? Talk to one of the *Thresholds* writers. We'd love to help the community know you better.

I've learned that our young people have a great gift in Mark P-R as their pastor, mentor, and friend. I wish I'd had someone with his energy, empathy, and insight in my life at that age.

I've learned to decode some of the unfamiliar concepts of Quaker-speak, and I've learned that Mike Huber is a pastor who is not easily stumped on Quaker issues, whether the question relates to oatmeal or art or Advent. Have a question? Let us know and we'll see if we can stump the pastor with it.

I've learned that we, the community of WHF, have dreams for our lives together. What are your dreams for our community? Share them with Peg Edera, and they may be included in our "Sweet Dreams are Made of This" feature.

What have you learned from reading *Thresholds* this year? What would you like to learn? How can we best meet your needs for "Connection, Clarity, and Transformation"? Let us know by talking to Mark Pratt-Russum, Peg Edera, or Lysley Rollins, or email WHFThresholds-at-gmail-dot-com.

Continued from page 3, NWYM

The Representatives then entered into a time of discernment around the following question:

- With the hope of keeping as much of our YM together as possible, what is best for the YM?

Many Representatives stated that their churches supported the Elders' decision to release West Hills Friends. Some Representatives asked that Friends in disagreement with the *Faith and Practice* quietly withdraw from the YM. A few churches admitted that their congregations were divided in their views, and it was difficult to represent those views accurately.

It was suggested that West Hills might become an "affiliate member" of NWYM. Some Friends who support an ongoing connection with WHF argued against a separate category of membership for WHF, because WHF would then lack the fullness of relationship. Lynn Clouser Holt (a pastor at North Valley Friends) thanked WHF for its faithfulness in following God's leading.

Clyde Parker (pastor of Eugene Friends) wondered if there might be an amicable way to part company and bless each other: *Faith and Practice* allows an Area Meeting to start a new Yearly Meeting. Could churches bound by theology instead of geography form a new YM? Retha McCutchen (YM Superintendent) requested that Representatives go home and ask their Area Meetings if they were led to start their own Yearly Meeting. There was discussion around forming two Yearly Meetings, but some Representatives spoke out strongly against the idea.

Clerk of the Meeting Brad Holton did admirable work. After hearing Representatives voice approval and disapproval around the Elders' decision, Brad declared that the called meeting was not in agreement. The Administrative Council will take up the discussion once more and report back after Midyear Boards.

Keri and Julie serve as Representatives from WHF (with Wilbur as our alternate).

Continued from page 3, Kindling

Yet, the biggest gift has been the opportunity to get to know people at WHF more deeply. During Kindling Conversation times, I have heard pieces of people's stories that I have never heard before. I get to see a part of their beautiful minds that I have never seen before.

I cherish this time we have together, and I hope it continues to be valuable for our community. One way this can continue to be sustainable is to let me hear from you. Do you have a topic you'd like to talk about? Do you know someone with expertise in a certain area? Do you have a short film or podcast you'd like to share with others and talk about? If so, get in contact with me! mark-at-westhillsfriends-dot-org



Quaker Ink: Love you, Mama

By Heather Penzel

TW: death, cancer, losing a parent

In the summer of 2014, I lost my mother to cancer. It was her third battle, and I'm not going to lie: I was praying for God to just take her already. I traveled to Florida to say good-bye.

She was a shadow of herself. She was so cute with her buzz-cut white fuzz just starting to grow back in after the chemo, but the only person who could make her smile was her sister-cousin, Phyllis.

She was embarrassed by her lack of ability to control her bodily functions. She was constantly uncomfortable, frequently upset, and occasionally frightened. Don't get me wrong: Jesus was always her first love, and there was nothing more that she looked forward to than being with Him where He is. However, she was suffering. When you're heavily medicated and in incredible pain, the things that lie beneath can begin to surface. Sometimes it happens in your sleep and you wake up calling for help.

I wasn't just watching my mother suffer. I was watching my 75-year-old father sleep on the couch, so he could tend to her every need.

One night, Mama's voice woke me up before it woke him. Even though I rushed to her and comforted her in the darkness, he felt horrible. He seemed to feel like he'd let her down. In reality, it was himself he had disappointed. The next day I made him take a nap. He humored me by lying down for an hour, and then he was back to his post. He was losing the love of his life, and he didn't want to miss a minute of being with her.

When I sat with her during that last visit, I would hold her hand until it was too uncomfortable for her. It felt important to tell her that we would all be ok and that it was ok if she needed to go. I wasn't sure if she would remember, so I said it again a few days later. She seemed confused and perhaps hurt. I hope now she understands that it was out of my own discomfort in hating to see her suffer.

I told her that I was going to get a tattoo of her. She was slightly horrified. I'm pretty sure she referred to me with both first and middle name in that motherly tone of judgment, "Heather Helene."

I don't really know how mourning is supposed to go. I don't have a lot of experience with loss this close. I was emotionally exhausted for a long time after she passed. I took 6 months off of work, but even resting for a month and a half and the adventures of traveling abroad weren't able to coax me out of a sense of inertia. I wanted to figure out ways to mourn. If I lived in Minnesota, I'd go visit her grave. Last time I was there, my brother and I went. He had her for 18 more years than I did, but neither of us have it easier than the other. We mourn differently. I build ofrendas and have done things like light and lift off paper lanterns in her memory.

This last November 20th would've been her 76th birthday, so I got a tattoo. I can look down and see that part of my heart that is missing. It's in the form of a smiling 20-year-old beauty wearing a 1960s two-piece bathing suit, with a signature that says, "Love you, Mama."

