

Friends United Meeting Triennial was this week in Wichita, Kansas

Wess Daniels was one of the speakers with his topic being Publishers of Truth

This is a topic I've been drawn to lately and I want to share some of Wess' thoughts

(For a link to the message on Wess Daniels blog, see

<http://gatheringinlight.com/2017/07/14/the-parable-of-the-grain-of-wheat-on-being-publishers-of-truth-today/>)

Early Quakers called themselves Publishers of Truth before they were known as Friends

Both orally through preaching and one on one—they were vocal in sharing the Truth

They also wrote prolifically—journals, ideas, pamphlets—a real treasure for us today

I have a sense that we have been lax in continuing this Leading

It will change and involve social media and blogs—but are we not Publishers of Truth?

I'm impressed with the depth of thought at North Seattle Friends Church

I want us to be more prolific at sharing our Truth!

"Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal." John 12:24-25 The Message Bible

We easily think about a seed falling to the ground and being replanted—no big deal

It isn't a painful process or even a sad one—it's necessary for a new tree to grow

But when you think about it as a metaphor for our lives—it's a bit different

It's hard to let go of everything you have ever known and give up—for what? For death?

Yet this dying to what we thought we knew and allowing ourselves to be remade is crucial

It is submitting to the resurrection power of transformation

It is allowing the Spirit to come through in a whoosh and fill us with new power

But that letting go is hard

What have we held on to assuming it to be the life blood, without question?

Life and truth is not static—yet the church often holds tight to traditional understandings

When are they life and when are they not?

Do we need to let go of them so that God can resurrect new life within us?

A wise master had an apprentice who learned carefully and did everything as the master taught. But the master was troubled because the apprentice never deviated from the ways and teachings of the master. The apprentice was crushed, promising to be ever vigilant. The master wanted more than a duplication of self. The master yearned for someone who would take all the learning and turn it new ways, considering how to apply it in new situations the master had not encountered. The master yearned for the learning to grow and take on new understandings and knowledge.

Both concepts are important in understanding what it means to be publishers of truth today

Multiple times in the sermon on the mount in Matthew, Jesus said, "You have heard it said..."

This is what the apprentice knows—the foundations—which are important

But it isn't the end of the story—Jesus went on to say, "But I say to you..."

We're called to do the same thing—to go on and apply what we've learned to new situations

To Listen with Jesus for way forward within this new context or understanding

For the Spirit to give us new openings for "such a time as this"

George Fox said, “*You will say, Christ said this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?*”

We could say, “Christ said this, and the apostles said this, and George Fox said this
And John Woolman said this... *but what canst thou say?*”

The power is not in simply repeating the words of the past
But in letting them work within us and shape us so that they take root and give new life
Until we too are given a message—until we too are Publishers of Truth

I heard George Myers and friends sing as The Nowhere Men—a Beatles tribute band
They sounded exactly like the Beatles—but they weren’t the Beatles
As Quakers we don’t want to be the “tribute band” or “cover band” for Quakers of 1600-1700
We are Quakers! We’re the Quakers of 2017!

Rather than simply tell the foundational messages—we must take the teachings and make them our own
We must become masters of our tradition, yes
But more than that we must become masters of interpreting our tradition
We live in new contexts and changing community needs
We must interpret our Quaker tradition in the new context of today
With today’s community needs

The Receivers of Truth

Think about the early Quakers and how well their message as Publishers of Truth was received
Thousands of Quakers were jailed for their audacious Truth
They challenged all of Christendom in their world
They challenged patriarchy and sexism
They challenged racism and slavery
They challenged the social mores and codes of conduct

Their prophetic message announced a new era of liberation for God’s people—a new Truth
Let go of the kind of theology, practices and structures that only benefit a few
Find new life in Christ, our Present Teacher

But it didn’t go ever well—people did not want to hear their message
Many were jailed, many lost their property, some were executed, some became very ill and died

Jesus told us we would be persecuted like he was—that people wouldn’t want to hear us
Why are we surprised when people don’t want to hear our message?

In our efforts to make our message palpable to the seeker, have we lost our prophetic message?

Clearly our message was prophetic in the early days—today not so much
Speaking this kind of prophetic message won’t be popular—it never was, never will be
Why would we think that people will flock to us to hear the power of what we know to be true?
Yet we feel like failures because of it

As Publishers of Truth, we must be bold with our prophetic message, trusting the outcome to God

But even for those of us that are Quakers—we often object to the new Truths shared among us
We hold on tightly to what we have always known—believing it to be the right and full Truth
But some of those understandings are based on misunderstandings
We can all name things we thought were absolutely true when we were much younger

My Grandma was making strawberry freezer jam
Her foster son asked what it was, saying, "whatever it is, I don't like it!"
We teased him relentlessly after that about not liking something he absolutely loved

We laugh at someone rejecting something so delicious without trying it first
But the truth is that we do that all the time

Rather than recognizing that our spiritual awareness and understandings are dynamic
We so often hold on to what we knew and thought to be absolute Truth
Especially when we are confronted with something new, different, or out of the ordinary

Anthony de Mello said, *"The truth that sets us free is almost always the Truth we would rather not hear. So when we say something isn't true, what we all too frequently mean is, 'I don't like it.'"*

It takes hard work to die to our old ways of being and our incomplete, yet familiar Truths
But Jesus said, unless the seed falls to the ground and dies, it won't bring forth life

I'm not saying we throw everything out and reinvent it all
But we must Listen with Christ, our Present Teacher and "taste" the new ideas that we hear
Ask the Living Christ to show us Truth
Think on it, ponder it, look at it in new and different ways
Talk it over with others
But do it with an openness to hearing new Truths!

Are we willing to be Receivers of the Truth?
How do we become ready Receivers of the Truth?

Let us become fearless as Publishers of Truth
Let us also be fearless as Receivers of Truth