

After a long search, in 1647 George Fox heard the answer to the cry within when he heard these words...

“There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.”

5 years later, in 1652 Fox heard the Lord say to him,

“If I put the same spirit that was on the prophets and apostles when they wrote the Scriptures, he or she would shake the whole country for 10 miles around when they spoke.”

The next day, they came to a great high hill called Pendle Hill

Fox climbed to the top of it with much ado because it was steep

But he was moved by the Lord to climb to the top

...there atop of the hill I was moved to sound the day of the Lord; and the Lord let me see a-top of the hill in what places he had a great people to be gathered.

As he went down the hill side he found a spring of water and refreshed himself

This was the beginning of the Friends movement, of Quakers

It was a beginning of something significant

In 2017 Friends gathered in Newberg, Oregon—Displaced Friends from Northwest Yearly Meeting

We asked each other and God why we were gathered—What is God calling us to create?

After 2 ½ days of Listening, the resounding answer was Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting

It is the beginning of something significant—still emerging, but real!

At the end of our gathering as Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting, Cherice Bock brought closing remarks

Exclaiming that we have done good work together for which we are all grateful.

She likened the work to child birth in which there is labor and a need for healing.

But when one meets the new baby, one sees new life and hopefully it has all been worth it.

For Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends, this is where we are

—looking into the face of this new creation!

There is hard work coming with lots of people work to do.

We have birthed a new thing. It is a sacramental moment.

The future will be stretching and painful. Separation is part of our work.

Are we ready to be uncomfortable, make mistakes, and apologize a lot?

At the same time, are we ready to nurture new life and let it grow?

Will we give it the space to mature and follow God? Or will we try to control new life?

Will we truly be open to new Openings as they come?

Some have suggested that we are a Phoenix, rising from the ashes

Very little is as exhilarating as new beginnings—new adventures

Yet, I’m very aware that it is not truly of our creation

We were gathered together—brought there with a sense of calling

People are drawn together for a purpose—gathered by God

George Fox used the phrase—“God had a great people to be gathered”

We usually shorten it to a great people to be gathered

But I noticed that it actually says... *in what places he had a great people to be gathered*

God had people in certain places that people were ready to be gathered

Have you ever had the sense that you have been drawn or pulled to a place or work?

That coming has not truly been of your own doing—You are compelled to be there

When you want to leave—somehow you are not released to do so

It is that sense that I’m talking about—we are gathered together by God

When I came to Seattle, God gave me a vision of “a people to be gathered”
And as many gathering places as Starbucks and as varied
I don’t have clarity about how this vision is fleshed out and what it looks like
But I am convinced that in Seattle, God has a great people to be gathered as Quakers
People often say I was always a Quaker—I just didn’t know it
They are here and a match for who we are—ready for God to gather us

What does it mean to be gathered? How is the church a gathered people?

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20
Church as a gathered community is loosely held... permeable edges... able to grow...
not contained... gathered by God... potential... hope... community...

But I also sense that we are gathered by God for a purpose—we have work to do together
Rather than be a group of people who enjoy being together with our friends
We are gathered to do the work of God together
We are gathered around calling, values, purpose, understandings

The connection to those who have been gathered with us is often called “Fellowship”

Thomas Kelly talks about that as a “pale and thin word”
Rather than really recognize the spiritual power of the blessed community
The church has settled for the social connection in our understanding of fellowship
*“The precious word Fellowship becomes identified with a purely horizontal
relation of [person] to [person], not with the horizontal-vertical relationship of
[person] to [person] in God.” Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, p 80*
No wonder we become dissatisfied with the social connections within the church
We easily reduce our understanding of the gathered community to a social gathering
We yearn for a place where our best friends all gather with us in worship
But I don’t think that is why we are gathered in community as the people of God
We’re gathered together as people living in “holy obedience”
We’re gathered together to do the work of God

But along with new beginnings and a sense of being gathered, comes foggy knowings

We like clarity, programs that are well defined, strong sense of what is next
But I find in most new beginnings and when we have a sense of being gathered by God
That there is a lot of fog!—a lot of unknowing
It is like being in the fog—like crossing a bridge on a foggy night
Astoria bridge is 4.1 miles long—weird on a foggy night
We can't see the other side—we have to trust the bridge and the Dept of Transportation
Keep driving and we do come to solid land
But like driving 4.1 miles across a bridge in the fog—I must stay in this present moment
Focused on what is in front of me—watch the white line—drive slowly
In life I focus on Jesus, slow down and hold on—I ask Jesus what is next and Listen
We must trust God—trust that God created this new thing and gathered us to it
Trust that God will lead us step by step and day by day
Ruthless Trust—Manning is correct in that this is the key to living fully in God’s love
Don’t fight the fog—look for the places where the sun breaks through and pay attention

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us... Luke 1:78 NRSV