


PHOENIX QUAKER MEETING NEWSLETTER

(Noticias de la reunión de los Amigos de Phoenix)

DECEMBER 2025

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Sunday, December 7	9:00 – 10:00am	Faith and Practice Discussion
	10:00 – 11:00am	Meeting for Worship
	10:00 – 11:00am	First Day School (Sunday School)
	10:00 – 11:00am	Childcare Ages 0-5
Sunday, December 14	9:00 – 10:00am	Peace and Social Concerns Committee Meeting
	10:00 – 11:00am	Meeting for Worship
	10:00 – 11:00am	First Day School (Sunday School)
	10:00 – 11:00am	Childcare Ages 0-5
	11:30am	Potluck Lunch/Fellowship
Sunday, December 21 	9:00 – 10:00am	Experiment with Light
	10:00 – 11:00am	Meeting for Worship
	10:00 – 11:00am	First Day School (Sunday School)
	10:00 – 11:00am	Childcare Ages 0-5
	11:00am	Cookie Exchange
Sunday, December 28	10:00 – 11:00am	Meeting for Worship
	10:00 – 11:00am	First Day School (Sunday School)
	10:00 – 11:00am	Childcare Ages 0-5

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WINTER NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



- Faith & Play, Godly Play with Elizabeth Freyman
- Times and Seasons: A Quaker Reflection on Christmas
- The Myths of Finishing Strong, and New Year, New Me
- Meet a Phoenix Quaker Friend
- Nancy Hicks Marshall Received an Award
- Call to Action: Accepting Non-perishable food items and pet food
- Cookie Exchange December 21!

FAITH & PLAY®, GODLY PLAY® WITH ELIZABETH FREYMAN

On Sunday, November 23, we welcomed Elizabeth Freyman of Albuquerque Meeting and IMYM as our facilitator for a 1 1/2 hour worship-sharing session on the Meeting Community. About 40 people attended, including several from Tempe Meeting and seven children.

About thirty of us were folks who had not been able to attend the Annual Gathering of IMYM in Durango and were not likely to have the resources to do so in the near future.





Using materials (both material and spiritual) from *Faith & Play®* and *Godly Play®*, Elizabeth led us in a sharing session of what makes up our Meeting community, what the process brought up for us, and what, if anything could be removed and still have the community.

Many of us had soulful thoughts to share, and at the end of our time together, the general sense of the meeting was 'magical,' 'wonderful,' and enriching.

Worship was followed by a Thanksgiving-style potluck and lively conversation. Many thanks to Elizabeth for sharing her ministry with us.

~ Submitted by Nancy Marshall



TIMES AND SEASONS: A QUAKER REFLECTION ON CHRISTMAS

Gill Sewell reflects on the Quaker tradition of not marking 'times and seasons' and finding the holy in the every day. (Borrowed from Quaker.org.uk)

Early Quakers did not observe Christmas nor mark other 'times and seasons'. They believed that no day was more holy than any other, and believed that each day, and all of life, was sacred (Quaker Faith & Practice 27.39 and 27.42). Today, as with so many things in the Quaker community, there is a full spectrum of practices and responses.

There are those who do the full Christian event to mark the birth of Jesus with candles, carols, presents and Christmas pudding, and others who will observe simply and quietly. There are also those who will choose not to mark this Christmas season in any way, but who nonetheless give daily witness to their faith.

Whilst I experience this sense of the 'sacred always' I do, like many Quakers, find times and seasons helpful markers from which to reflect and rejoice. I delight in the new spring buds, the crisp autumn leaves, the wisps of breath on a cold winter morning. I celebrate Easter as a time of new beginnings and advent as a time of deepening darkness with the promise of new light to follow.

The Ordinary Moments of Each Day

New Year is like the turning of a page and the chance to consciously approach a new chapter in my life, with renewed intentions. I find the sacred manifests itself in laughter in the office, good music on my headphones, shared meals at home, and Sunday evenings with six of us on the sofas watching Blue Planet II. In these ordinary moments of the day, I can be reminded of the divine. Watching specks of dust dance in the sunlight – in the small things of the universe – I am reminded of my belonging in the cosmos and my part in being love and light. With Christmas approaching, I mark the Sundays of advent – knowing that (in the northern hemisphere) the shortest day approaches.

Earlier humans have marked this passage of the sun/moon as sacred with such festivals as Yule – later supplanted by the Christian Christmas festival. I engage with this reminder of birth in the darkest days, heralding the arrival of life, and life more abundant, in the months to come. Advent reminds me too that in the darkness there are moments for hibernation and reflection, so that when the daylight comes, I have a readiness to turn to face the sun.



Christmas tree in Darlington Friends Meeting House. Image: Robyn Drummond

Celebrating in Community

We humans want to celebrate in community, perhaps remember those who've died, perhaps to celebrate new and burgeoning relationships – and also our sense of belonging. Recognising too, that for some there may be little to celebrate – in poverty, isolation or war-torn zones. Globally the world has perhaps held too much darkness this year with several political leaders unable to beam shards of goodness and light.

As nights draw in, it is a reminder to me that I need to hold my spark of light faithfully and boldly, witnessing in the darker corners of my community. Holding and living by the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity and care of the environment remains a challenge in my preparations for a Christmas

celebration. I make donations (including at the food bank), try to make good ethical choices with my purchases, and identify ways in which to share.

Quakers mark Christmas in different ways but I will spend Christmas Eve looking up at the stars and hoping fervently that the seven billion people on this planet will indeed show good will to one another.

THE MYTHS OF “FINISHING STRONG” AND “NEW YEAR, NEW ME”

Copied from theclearspace.co.uk written by Laura

It's always interesting to me that December has such a different energy to the rest of winter. The holidays bring joy, celebration and connection and I LOVE Christmas, yule and the winter solstice, but I also really notice how the energy of it can feel like it demands a lot from us. Society tells us that we should end the year with momentum and enter the next one as a new version of ourselves, but nature tells a different story.



The earth, right now, is deep in winter reflections and rest. The trees have shed their leaves. The soil is dark and still. Life is quietly gathering strength below the surface. The energy of the season is inwardly focused, asking us to pause, rest and restore rather than push forward relentlessly. This time of year can be a space for gentleness and introspection: a chance to honour the need for rest, self-care, and nourishment. Winter is not a time for striving; it is time for gestation. A time to gather warmth and wisdom before the next turning of the wheel. It's no wonder so many of us feel drained by the end of the year. Honouring winter means listening to the parts of ourselves that ask for slower mornings, gentler days and space to just be.

Finishing Softly and Winter Reflection

As we approach the threshold of a new calendar year, it's important to remember that this isn't a new season. While the Winter Solstice makes the rebirth of the sun, the light returns slowly. The natural world teaches us that winter is not a time for new beginnings. Instead, it is a time for consolidation, reflection and restoration of our energy in preparation for spring. When we choose to honour winter rest, to slow down, reflect and replenish, we align ourselves with the natural rhythm of life. Rest is not

laziness. It's preparation. It's sacred groundwork for what comes next. While the world outside rushes toward newness, we can choose softness. Light a candle, wrap yourself in a cozy blanket and allow this time to be a space for integration. Can you arrive gently at the end of the year, knowing that growth will come on its own time?

Long nights and cold days offer us a chance to focus inward, to process the year that's passed and to take stock of our lives. This doesn't mean ignoring our aspirations or avoiding growth. Instead, can we give ourselves the grace to rest before the inevitable burst of energy that comes with spring?

How to Create Space for Softness and Nourishment in December

When we think about the themes of the winter solstice, we can see how a call to bring light into the darkness aligns with how we celebrate Christmas. December is a month that can feel overwhelmingly busy. From preparing for the holidays to managing end-of-the year work responsibilities, it's easy to fall into a cycle of stress and over-scheduling. But in all of the chaos there are simple, powerful ways to create space for more softness, slowness and for winter reflection.

Take some time each day to reflect: find a quiet corner, light a candle, and sit with your thoughts. This practice can help you release the pressure to do and invite you to simply be.

Prioritise rest and sleep: it's easy to sacrifice rest during the busy holiday season, but winter is meant to be a time of restoration.

Simplify your holiday plans: saying no to some invitations and commitments allows you to preserve your energy and gives you the space to recharge. Remember, quality over quantity.

MEET A PHOENIX QUAKER MEETING FRIEND

We are highlighting one person a month, who attends the Phoenix Quaker Meeting, as a way to learn more about each other.

MEET REESE BUTENKO!

How long have you attended the Phoenix Quaker Meeting?

I have attended since October of 2023.

What drew you to the meeting, and what resonates with you the most about Quaker Beliefs/theology?

I was adopted as a toddler and grew up in a tiny town in South Jersey. My mom raised me as a Quaker for my entire life. It was a very positive experience, and I wanted to bring my family into that type of environment. What resonates with me about Quakerism can be summed up in two lines. God is Love, and Live Simply So That Others May Simply Live. I really want everyone to have equality and the ability to live their own life, and be whoever they want to be, without judgement or persecution.

Do you have a partner, spouse and/or children?

Yes, my husband's name is John Butenko, and we have a soon to be four-year-old daughter named Rowan. I also have an older daughter named Marley who is in school in Virginia.

What inspires you the most in life?

I find this question very difficult to answer because so many different things inspire me, there is not one driving force. My children, love, nature, music, when people come together to do good for society, spiritual and emotional growth, acceptance, quality time, sharing a delicious meal, so many beautiful things to enjoy in life.



What do you do for work/career?

Currently I am not working because I'm a stay-at-home parent, but before I had my daughter, I owned a small property management/personal assistant business. My dream job was to be a fiction writer.

What do you do for fun?

I love hiking, spending time with my family, cooking, listening to music, reading, comedy, and anything beach related.

What is your favorite meal?

Actually, my favorite meal just so happens to be Thanksgiving! My grandmother made the most amazing, traditional Thanksgiving dinners with all the sides, and the whole family got together every year for a great time. I enjoy trying to duplicate that experience for my family. One day I want to be that grandmother.

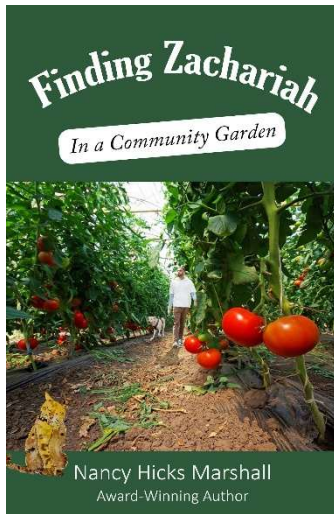
What is your favorite book?

"The Gargoyle" by Andrew Davidson. It's a beautiful and sad story about how much the world changes when we don't have arrogance and vanity in the way.

What is your favorite movie?

My favorite movie my whole life has always been "The Neverending Story". Ever since I was little. I even watched it a couple of years ago and it was still just as great.

NANCY HICKS MARSHALL RECEIVED AN AWARD!



Nancy Hicks Marshall, author of *Finding Zachariah in a Community Garden*, was recently honored with the 2025 Arizona Literary Award, A Global Celebration of Literacy Excellence by Arizona Authors Association, for Best of Category-Published Fiction. Congratulations to Nancy!

Nancy Hicks Marshall found the Quakers when, in college, she sought a summer service program that might also be an adventure. The chapel bulletin board offered service projects in which youth of many religions could teach others about their faith. As hers was then in question, she did not want to proselytize. The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker service organization, offered a two-month summer service program in rural Mexico in which there was no preaching of the faith. That was perfect! Nancy spent two months in the mountain village of Tlacotepec, Mexico, doing arts and crafts programs with local children and loving the low-key spirituality of the AFSC and other project members.

Becoming a member of Morningside Heights Meeting in New York around 1970, Nancy transferred her membership to Phoenix Meeting in 1975 when she moved here. She met Vance in Meeting and they were married under the care of the Meeting in 1978.

On top of having two wonderful children, Nancy has had a variety of careers. They include high school history teacher, Executive Director of ACLU (AZ), work as an attorney in the Juvenile Court, and, since "retirement," writing several award-winning books, including *A RATTLER'S TALE*, *A DRY HATE*, and, most recently, *FINDING ZACHARIAH*--for which she won an award for best fiction from the Arizona Authors Association on November 15. Nancy likes to think that although she doesn't write specifically FOR Quakers, she always writes as a Quaker--seeking and finding that of God within almost everyone. In ZACH, she found it in both a feral cat and a homeless drunken bum sleeping on a broken couch in an abandoned lot. When the Spirit moves, everyone can find healing, and a second chance.

Is Nancy Hicks Marshall a "Hicksite" Friend? That's for you to find out. Learn about Elias Hicks, early Friend, their common place of origin, and judge for yourself. Order your book here: <https://bookshop.org/> or Amazon (\$10 paperback or \$4.95 Kindle) or ask Nancy, \$10, paperback, signed.

CALL TO ACTION



It is a fact that 1 in 8 Americans receive SNAP benefits. SNAP benefits are electronic food assistance payments provided through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to help low-income individuals and families purchase food. SNAP benefits have been denied and delayed this month, and families, couples, individuals and pets are in great need of a food source.

We are currently accepting non-perishable food donations, as well as pet food, for the Paradise Valley Food bank. You may bring them into the Meeting House and look for a bin in the main room to put the items in. They will be delivered directly to the food bank. If you are not able to bring donations to the Meeting House, please consider finding a food bank close to home to take your donations to. Thank you, every donation counts!



On Sunday, December 21st, we will have our annual Cookie Exchange! Whether you enjoy baking cookies, Christmas themed or not, and have the time, or you pick something up at the store, please join us directly following worship for a wonderful time of exchanging cookies, and plan to take plenty of them home with you!



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Here are the links to *QuakerSpeak* that were included in November's Saturday reminder emails:

- Growing the Community of Friends – Embracing Diversity in Quakerism
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAb9b_vbgXQ
- Eye-Opening Lessons from Living In a Quaker Intentional Community
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WftuBoiJgNE>
- Pastoring in the Society of Friends
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NLg7RDBfiE>
- The Secret to Quaker Prayer: Holding in the Light
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEu4PCtt_2s
- Envisioning a Strong Future for Quakerism
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mruY5xmiupA>



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