

FROM THE COMMUNITY OF

Quaker Monastery

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matt 18:20

Spring/Summer 2011



MISSION:

Our vocation as Christian monastics is to relate the redemptive love of Christ Jesus through a life affirmed as drawn out by the Holy Spirit; to share the living message of the gospel with pilgrims of all faiths, in the spirit of peace and goodwill, as exemplified by Christ and lived out in the first communities of primitive Christianity.

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Spring emerged slowly this year as winter held an unseasonable grip so firmly that the leaves on many trees were reluctant to unravel themselves until the latter part of 5th month. That is late in the season even for northeast Michigan!

Resurrection First Day, (more commonly known as Easter) was observed at Quaker Monastery in the particular atmosphere of reflection which allows the magnitude of the Resurrection message to settle upon the soul.

Our memorial observance of this most important cornerstone of the Christian faith actually begins days before Resurrection First Day, as we turn our every attention with solemn hearts to the memory of the last supper; the arrest, trials and sufferings of our Lord. Common work at - and outside - the monastery is reduced to an absolute minimum and the cloister is cleared of distractions.

Daily community study time focuses on scriptural readings read aloud which relate the details important to remember and meditate upon in framing silence. Candle light memorial vigils are observed.

The days are marked by ongoing thoughtful reflection, to allow the profound enormity of Christ's sacrifice, and its meaning for mankind, to impress deeply upon our hearts and minds. Even the monastery window lights are extinguished as part our of commemorative expression during this time.

Finally, with great joy and thanksgiving, beginning at the time of sunrise on, and throughout Resurrection First Day,

we stand in the light of Christ's victory over death and celebrate the miracle of the risen Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, whose resurrection and victory over death assures us of a future hope.

This is an important season of spiritual renewal for us as a community, and a time of personal reaffirmation of the dedicated monastic life we are committed to living - and blessed to live - in the Lord's service at Bethlehem Cloister, Quaker Monastery.



*The God
of all grace
will Himself
make you
strong, firm and
steadfast.*

1 Peter 5:10

Monastery News

With the warming weather, outside chores multiply, but it is hardly challenging as it becomes more and more delightful to work outdoors.

Once the weather stabilized from the severe storms we experienced in 4th and 5th month, we assessed all of the wind damage wrought onto our trees, pasture fencing and building roofs and began tending to the repairs on a long list of maintenance concerns. It has been quite a list to get through, but every item crossed off as "done" brings a smile and a feeling of relief for having it behind us.

Green Chapel

We have been blessed with opportunity again this spring which is allowing us to work once more on the *Green Chapel* project.

Read more about our progress on page 4.

Meeting House



Monastery Schedule

Our week begins on 1st Day (Sunday)

Contact us if you would like to attend any of the following

1st Day

9am Bible Study
10am Meeting for Worship (unprogrammed / silent)

4th Day

7 - 8 pm Open Reading Bible Study

6th Day, 1st Weeks

7 - 8 pm Peace Gathering

989-736-7627

The monastery Meeting House (chapel) has gotten a bright facelift from a new coat of exterior stain. It was a rush to get it done within the small weather worthy window of opportunity that presented itself - a rare few sunny dry days together. The rains have been relentless but working at top speed, Brother William accomplished the task in record time!

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Greener Still - every little bit counts!

We conserve energy in as many ways as possible and look ahead through planning ideas for future improvements.

While we use electricity throughout the monastery, dog kennel and farm barns, we do so minimally. In an effort to improve, in 4th month, all incandescent light bulbs were replaced with energy efficient bulbs - we even replaced all of the little peace lights (window candles which used 5 watts each) with LED bulbs that use only .25 watts each. The result is quite an energy savings - even in the small bulb replacement.

We look forward to the day when Quaker Monastery is able to rely more on solar and wind energy (it is very breezy here!) for its power needs.

Volunteer Appreciation

We have worked with wonderful people who have given generously of their time and resources to help us when we have needed assistance this spring. From sheep shearing, dog caring, tree planting, mechanical repairs, donations of plants and flowers and much, much more - all has made us feel blessed by kindness. Quaker Monastery flourishes from the love and concern of those who care about this monastic community. Our appreciation runs deep and we hold you in our prayers. Thank you, and may God bless you all.

*It's not how much
you do,
but how much love
you put into the doing
that matters.*



- Mother Theresa

Not Alone in Being New

I am the Lord, the God of every person on the earth. Nothing is impossible for me. Jeremiah 32:27

Sometimes new ideas are not easy to undertake and the difficulty often lies in the fact that there is no light to follow on an unblazed trail. Yet, in the Christian faith no idea is ever really new in itself, but rather little more than an old idea happening to new people, and illumination can be found, if sought, through prayer.

History has shown us that the practice of faith is a process of continual evolution and many faith groups grow and progress in new ways to keep up with contemporary times. This growth is often understood and undertaken as a positive form of faith renewal. While such growth might be challenging to endeavor, through the bible book of Acts strength and courage can be gained by learning how the early Christians worked out their structural evolution into an expression of faith based on salvation through Jesus Christ - which was conceptually unique and definitively different for them in their time. It would be no wonder that our forbearers might have heard comments such as, "There is no such thing!", in criticism to their beginnings as they followed the foundational leading of Christ in their lives.

Today, we see the Christian faith practiced and expressed in various and evolving ways. According to *Christianity Today*, there are approximately 38,000 Christian denominations. Included in that vast number is the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) who themselves also breakdown into several groups, and even sub-groups. While each Christian denomination and its splinter groups may be distinct in certain ways, all are ultimately united when fundamental faith is based on salvation through Jesus Christ. So, while evolution and growth may become expressed in differentiation, being expressively different is simply nothing more than uniqueness of calling within that unity.

Quaker Monastery experienced the challenges of being a new foundation by traveling on an unblazed trail with respect to the known traditions, both historically and contemporarily, as found within the Religious Society of Friends. The con-

cept of a "Quaker Monastery" had simply never been explored before. Yet, what is a monastery but a place designated to the worship of God, through the discipline of a schedule, guided by a "rule" (or Advices), in an environment of dedicated space with affirmed community.

In fact, a topic entitled "Quaker monastery" was included in a conference program at a well known Quaker study center just a few years ago. Within that topic, prayer, meditation, peace and social witness were included and framed in the "monastic" concept.

While founding Quaker Monastery may have been, in some respects, akin to Robert Frost's poem *The Road Less Traveled*, there is still a big difference between "less" and never, and

it has been a comfort to know that we are not alone. In founding Quaker Monastery, we looked to God with faith and trust, and then "...took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

In fact, we have been richly blessed by support from several monastic communities who have offered encouragement, prayers and the sharing of information which has helped us with certain aspects of monastic foundation. This has not only proven helpful in a technical sense, it has enriched us spiritually as well. Knowing that support is near, that prayers are being offered and that we have experienced guides - brothers and sisters who have made themselves available as mentors - means a great deal and affirms to us the moving power of the Holy Spirit actively at work, leading, shepherding and providing what is needed.

Quaker Monastery may be new in the sense that it has never been lived out within the historical traditions of Quakerism, but monasticism is a centuries old pursuit by those who have been led to live apart in sole dedication to the Lord's service.

At Quaker Monastery, we know that with God, there is no such thing as "no such thing". Trusting in His care, we humbly offer our service to His glory.

In founding Quaker Monastery, we looked to God with faith and trust, and then "...took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

Creating a Green Chapel

The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity. This Word manifests itself in every creature.
Hildegarde of Bingen

The weather has allowed us to resume work on the *Green Chapel* project and we are making good progress so far. The site was staked out last year while the plans were being finalized and it is exciting to see everything coming together. The trees arrived in early 5th month, and so did volunteer workers to help with planting. What is the Green Chapel?



Brother William planting a Norway Spruce which will grow to be part of the living east wall of the Green Chapel at Quaker Monastery

We have felt led to create a small worship chapel for quite some time, envisioning a place to foster contemplation and meditation. Many ideas were discussed which included a structure built from straw bales or glass bottles, or log ends. However, we continually felt a leading towards building a truly green structure. So, after 2 years of prayer, consideration and the drafting of different plans, way opened for an opportunity to literally “plant” a green chapel.

The Green Chapel at Quaker Monastery is a naturally structured, living, green place of sacred space, purposed and designated for prayer and meditation. It is actually not a structure in the conventional sense, but rather a “non-structure” which exists with very low environmental impact.

The Green Chapel was designed for simplicity and to complement the surrounding environment while fos-



tering a sense of framed-in worship space consisting of inspiring living, growing textures. So, in place of man-made walls there are living branches of perennial evergreens and thus, the “walls” are trees. Each tree was selected and planted to complement the next. We used 2 different kinds of fast growing conifers - Norway and Siberian Spruce, which will grow quickly once they have been in the ground for about 2 years. Then we ac-

cented with slower growing Blue Spruce trees.

Next, we drew inspiration from our experience with rounded arbors to design the Green Chapel entrance foyer. Twenty five years ago, we made a grape arbor out of 4x16 foot livestock panels. Bending each panel into a hoop shape, we erected three panels and wired them together, one after the other, and then tied them to pre-set stakes for stability. It made a 12 foot long tunnel which was nearly 6 feet high on center - just tall enough to stand in. Then, we planted 10 concord grape vines along one side. As the years passed, the grape vines grew and wove themselves into the hooped panels and today, it stands as a beautiful and bountiful little hermitage space.

Using this same idea, we are now

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Green Chapel, continued from page 4....

ready to construct the entrance foyer of the Green Chapel but we have designed the hoops to provide a higher ceiling with panels that are 24 foot in length. However, we decided on a faster growing plant vine and so the lovely hops plant was chosen for its vigorous and rapid growth (over 20 feet per year), as well as for the beauty of their pale green, heart shaped leaves and unique yellow hanging cones. As for the chapel apse, it is as God has provided - our great earthly dome which He called "sky".

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. -Genesis 1:6-8

Thus, the Green Chapel is a living structure, and as such, it will be maintained, cared for and groomed for the purpose it is intended. With each passing year, as it grows and matures, its character will evolve. We even look forward to the possibility of some wildlife habitation (birds perhaps) in the years to come.

When finished, the Green Chapel will be dedicated to peace thought, as space for meditation, and prayer without walls.

Those who visit Quaker Monastery on retreat are sure to find it a source of spiritual refreshment and inspiration.

Our Thanks....

The Green Chapel project was made possible in part by the kindness of benefactors and volunteers whose assistance we are deeply grateful to God for. Please know that you will all continue to be in our prayers. May God bless you for your generosity. We could not do this without you.



Above: A Siberian pine is planted on the west wall of the Green Chapel. Below: A volunteer carefully sets the tree before filling it in and watering in the final stage of planting..



In Appreciation...

The Friends of Quaker Monastery would like to express appreciation to the Brothers and Sisters of the Anglican **Order of Julian of Norwich** in Waukesha WI, and the Sisters and Brothers of the **Ecumenical Order of Charity**, for their assistance and prayers for our concern in rewriting our Advices and Discipline, (otherwise known as a Rule or Customary), for the community at Quaker Monastery. Their kindness and support has been important to our development and a meaningful source of spiritual encouragement to us.



Make it Fresh for your Dog!

Breakfast Egnog Recipe

1/2 cup whole milk
1 raw egg
1/4 cup plain yoghurt
1/2 grated fresh carrot
1/2 teaspoon bone meal

Mix and blend together until smooth and serve 3x weekly.

NOTE: This is not a complete meal in itself, but it is a nice supplement to a regular breakfast meal - and dogs really enjoy it!

Questions: Which vegetables do dogs prefer? Do you cook their vegetables or feed them raw?

Answers: Just like people, dogs can display individual preferences but, they generally like all fresh vegetables including: squash, pumpkin, cabbage, carrots, broccoli, beans and peas - just to name a few of the favorites of our own dogs. While we often cook their vegetables into rich meaty stews, dogs also enjoy many of them raw, especially carrots! Never feed canned vegetables.

Do not feed a dog raw or cooked onions.



The Natural Dog Dish

by Sister Anne

Does Holistic Nutrition for Dogs Really Matter?

In the world of dogs, few topics are more debated than the subject of dog food. There are so many opinions as to what the "right" feeding program should be that it can be confusing for a dog owner to make choices that they feel completely comfortable with. Does holistic nutrition for dogs really matter?

The Collie dogs at Quaker Monastery have been fed a natural diet for nearly 30 years and our experience has been positive in every way. Our dogs live *long* healthy lives on a holistic, natural diet of a broad variety of fresh foods.

After genetic diversity, few things have such a profound impact on the health and longevity of a dog's life as diet does. A truly wholesome diet is not only paramount for physical health, we find it to be an important dimension of the psychological well being of a dog also. When food is truly satisfying, it nourishes the body as well as the mind which together comprise the health of the whole being. It is also personally satisfying to really know that the dogs enjoy each and every meal as much as they do - we never have to call for them twice at meal time, and the puppies are especially quick to respond to the chime of the meal bell!

Fresh food variety plays an important role in achieving balanced nutrition. Feeding the exact same processed food day in and day out for weeks, months and years only seems to cripple the digestive systems of most dogs. It is very common to hear someone say that their dog has food sensitivities and therefore can not tolerate anything but commercial dog food. We actually find the opposite to be true. Fed a variety of nutritious foods each and every day from the time they are weaned as puppies, (which includes meats, eggs, fresh vegetables, barley, rice, oatmeal, pro-biotics, goat milk and more) our dogs are especially thrifty and able to consume a diet of broad selection - with enthusiasm!

We grow a large amount of their food, so wholesome meats such as free-range lamb, duck, eggs, chevon, goat milk, garden produce, homemade cheeses, yoghurt, and fresh meaty bones are common fare.

Of course, it is never a good idea to suddenly change the long established diet of any animal. But, if you are planning to get a new puppy, research natural feeding options. Then, discuss the issue with your Veterinarian.

We hope you enjoy many wonderful years sharing wholesome, natural fresh foods with your dog - in healthy variety. And, remember, if a dog can eat the carrots or other vegetables featured in a can of commercially processed specialty dog food, why can't he just eat them natural in the first place?



A Collie puppy quickly answers the dinner bell at Quaker Monastery

Take Seven Steps Towards Peace this Week

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:15*

1. Love

Jesus said: Love one another...Gandhi wrote, "Nonviolence is based on the assumption that human nature ... unfaithfully responds to the advances of love." Today, focus on what you appreciate most about the person you like the least.

2. Prayer

"Prayer from the heart can achieve what nothing else in the world can," said Gandhi. Begin and end the day with a prayer for peace. Let peace begin with you.

3. Unity

"Understand that there is a vast difference between unity and uniformity." - Quaker Anne

Differences give variety to life and are often only on the surface anyway. Today look for three ways to see beyond outer differences in opinions, appearances, or goals. Find the meeting point of underlying unity that exists in diversity.

4. Gratitude

Begin the day by listing five things for which you are grateful and end it by sharing with one person all of the good things that happened to you today.

5. Kindness & Compassion

Every day we hear of random and senseless acts of violence. Participate in the counter-revolution of kindness started by Anne Herbert. Perform three acts of kindness today.

Mother Teresa implored us to "find someone who thinks he is alone and let him know that he is not." Today, do as Mother Teresa suggests.

6. Giving

Practice generosity by sharing time, energy and material resources with those in need. Clean out your closet, bureau drawers, or garage. Are there things you aren't using that might be of value to someone else? Today give away what you are no longer using.

7. Service

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve ... You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love." Sign up to volunteer a minimum of two hours this month with an organization of your choice. Share your commitment with at least one person.



**Interfaith Peace
Gathering
at
Quaker Monastery
6-19 -11 6 - 8:30 pm**

Prayer and round table discussion - sharing ways to promote peace within the family, with friends, communities and the world. It starts one step at a time, one person at a time; it begins with self.

Come join this reflection group.
Our next Peace Gathering will be in the fall.

Taken in large part (modified a bit) from The Campaign For Nonviolence, Kansas State University.
"Seven Steps" format from St. Andrews by the Lake Episcopal Church Newsletter, Harrisville, Michigan.

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