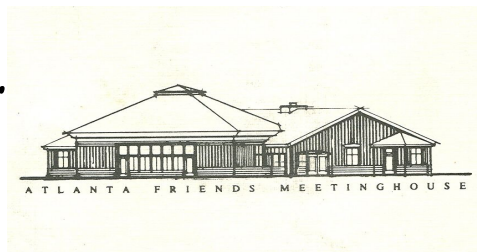


# Atlanta Friends Meeting Newsletter

Atlanta Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). All are welcome.



Meeting for Worship  
Each First Day (Sunday)  
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.  
701 W. Howard Ave.  
Decatur, GA 30030

## July 2013

**Query:** How does my life reflect Friends beliefs and thus encourage others to be interested in the Religious Society of Friends? Are our Meetings accessible and welcoming to everyone? When our Meetings for Worship are attended by visitors, are they welcomed warmly? Do I respond openly to inquiries about Quaker experience and belief?

[Here is the second and last part of the excerpt begun in the May newsletter from Ronald Dworkin's forthcoming book of the same name.]

### Ronald Dworkin: Religion Without God (part 2)

#### *Religious Science and Religious Value*

I have already suggested reasons why we should treat the attitude I have been describing as religious and recognize the possibility of religious atheism. We hope better to understand why so many people declare that they have a sense of value, mystery, and purpose in life in spite of their atheism rather than in addition to their atheism: why they associate their values with those of conventional religion in that way. We also hope to produce an account of religion that we can use to interpret the widespread conviction that people have special rights to religious freedom. [That is one of the projects of the new book.] I want now to explore another, more complex, reason for treating the attitude I describe as religious. Theists assume that their value realism is grounded realism. God, they think, has provided and certifies their perception of value: of the responsibilities of life and the wonders of the universe. In fact, however, their realism must finally be ungrounded. It is the radical independence of value from history, including divine history, that makes their faith defensible.

The heart of my argument is the following assumption. The conventional, theistic religions with which most of us are most familiar—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have two parts: a science part and a value part. The science part offers answers to important factual questions about the birth and history of the universe, the origin of human life, and whether or not people survive their own death. That part declares that an all-powerful and all-knowing god created the universe, judges human lives, guarantees an afterlife, and responds to prayer. Of course I do not mean that these religions offer what we count as scientific arguments for the existence and career of their god. I mean only that this part of many religions makes claims about matters of fact and about historical and contemporary causes and effects. Some believers do defend these claims with what they take to be scientific arguments; others profess to believe them as a matter of faith or through the evidence of sacred texts. I call them all scientific in virtue of their content, not their defense.

The value part of a conventional theistic religion offers a variety of convictions about how people should live and what they should value. Some of these are godly commitments, that is, commitments that are parasitic on and make no sense without the assumption of a god. Godly convictions declare duties of worship, prayer, and obedience to the god the religion endorses. But other religious values are not, in that way, godly: they are at least formally independent of any god. The two paradigm religious values I identified are in that way independent. Religious atheists do not believe in a god and so reject the science of conventional religions and the godly commitments, like a duty of ritual worship, that are

parasitic on that part. But they accept that it matters objectively how a human life goes and that everyone has an innate, inalienable ethical responsibility to try to live as well as possible in his circumstances. They accept that nature is not just a matter of particles thrown together in a very long history but something of intrinsic wonder and beauty.

The science part of conventional religion cannot ground the value part because—to put it briefly at first—these are conceptually independent. Human life cannot have any kind of meaning or value just because a loving god exists. The universe cannot be intrinsically beautiful just because it was created to be beautiful. Any judgment about meaning in human life or wonder in nature relies ultimately not only on descriptive truth, no matter how exalted or mysterious, but finally on more fundamental value judgments. There is no direct bridge from any story about the creation of the firmament, or the heavens and earth, or the animals of the sea and the land, or the delights of Heaven, or the fires of Hell, or the parting of any sea or the raising of any dead, to the enduring value of friendship and family or the importance of charity or the sublimity of a sunset or the appropriateness of awe in the face of the universe or even a duty of reverence for a creator god.

I am not arguing, against the science of the traditional Abrahamic religions, that there is no personal god who made the heavens and loves its creatures. I claim only that such a god's existence cannot in itself make a difference to the truth of any religious values. If a god exists, perhaps he can send people to Heaven or Hell. But he cannot of his own will create right answers to moral questions or instill the universe with a glory it would not otherwise have. A god's existence or character can only figure in the defense of such values as a fact that makes some different, independent background value judgment pertinent; it can only figure, that is, as a minor premise. Of course, a belief in a god can shape a person's life dramatically. Whether and how it does this depends on the character of the supposed god and the depth of commitment to that god. An obvious and crude case: someone who believes he will go to Hell if he displeases a god will very likely lead a different life from someone who does not have any such belief. But whether what displeases a god is morally wrong is not up to that god.

I am now relying on an important conceptual principle that we might call "Hume's principle" because it was defended by that eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher. This principle insists that one cannot support a value judgment—an ethical or moral or aesthetic claim—just by establishing some scientific fact about how the world is or was or will be. Something else is always necessary: a background value judgment that shows why the scientific fact is relevant and has that consequence. Yes, whenever I see that someone is in pain, or threatened with danger, I have a moral responsibility to help if I can. Just the plain fact of pain or danger appears to generate, all by itself, a moral duty. But the appearance is deceptive: the pain and danger would not generate a moral duty unless it was also true, as a matter of background moral truth, that people have a general duty to relieve or prevent suffering. Very often, as in this case, the background principle is too obvious to need stating or even thinking. But it must still be there, and it must still really connect the ordinary judgment with the more concrete moral or ethical or aesthetic judgment it is supposed to support.

I agree that the existence of a personal god—a supernatural, all-powerful, omniscient, and loving being—is a very exotic kind of scientific fact. But it is still a scientific fact and it still requires a pertinent background moral principle to have any impact on value judgments. That is important because those background value judgments can only themselves be defended—to the extent they can be defended at all—by locating them in a larger network of values each of which draws on and justifies the others. They can only be defended, as my account of the religious attitude insists, within the overall scheme of value.

So a god's existence can be shown to be either necessary or sufficient to justify a particular conviction of value only if some independent background principle explains why. We might well be convinced of some such principle. We might think, for instance, that the sacrifice of God's son on the Cross gives us a responsibility of gratitude to honor the principles for which He died. Or that we owe the deference to the god who created us that we owe a parent, except that our deference to that god must be unlimited and unstinting. Believers will have no trouble constructing other such principles. But the principles they cite, whatever they are, must have independent force seen only as claims of morality or some other department of value. Theists must have an independent faith in some such principle; it is that principle, rather than just the divine events or other facts they claim pertinent, that they must find they cannot but believe. What divides godly and godless religion—the science of godly religion—is not as important as the faith in value that unites them.

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## **Report to the Atlanta Friends Meeting of the SAYMA Representatives Meeting Columbia, SC, March 13, 2013**

**Clerk: Carol Nickle; Recording Clerk: Adrienne Weir**

**Highlights of the Meeting:** 30 Friends from around the YM introduced themselves.

### **Nominating Committee Report** (by Barbara Esther)

Looking early this year for volunteers for these positions whose terms expire:  
Assistant Clerk; Recording Clerk; Ministry & Worship (3 appointed by YM);  
SAYF steering Committee (3); Yearly Meeting Planning Committee (11);  
Ecological Concerns Committee: 2; SAYF editor; FCNL Representative (2);  
FGC Representative (1); Quaker Earthcare Witness (1); Quaker House (1);  
William Penn House (1)

### **Yearly Meeting 2013 Planning Committee Report** (by Carol Ciscel)

Y'all come! Note that the remodeling of the cafeteria has been completed! (Cheering!)  
Business meeting and the Thursday and Friday Plenary session will be back in Cannon.  
Get all Registration materials at: [http://sayma.org/top/online\\_documents.htm#YM](http://sayma.org/top/online_documents.htm#YM) Regis

### **Threshing Session Meeting** (by Michal Galovic)

There will be a Threshing Session on the SAYMA/AFSC relationship at YM. Please review the ad hoc committee's report at: [http://sayma.org/top/online\\_documents.htm#YM](http://sayma.org/top/online_documents.htm#YM) Regis. Lucy Duncan, Staff to the AFSC Friends Relation Committee, will be attending YM.

### **Ministry and Nurture Committee Report** (by Errol Hess)

Preparing State of the Yearly Meeting report from all submitted by Monthly Mtgs. Concern over several very small meetings that are struggling. Monthly Meetings are asked to appoint one member to the committee as much work is needed to be done and the YM is geographically very large.

### **Administrative Assistant's Report** (by Liz Perch)

SAYMA Census 2012:

Individuals: Total for: YM = 1,262 (ATL= 347; 27% of YM Total)

Change from 2011: YM: + 47; 3.9% (ATL: + 35 or 74% of YM Total)

Births: YM = 8 (ATL = 1 or 13% of Total); Deaths: YM = 15 (ATL = 4 or 26.7% of Total)

New Members: YM = 20; (ATL = 0); Transfers in: YM = 14; (ATL = 0)  
Marriages/Commitment Ceremonies: Under care: YM = 5 (ATL = 3 or 60% of Total)  
Marriages/Commitment Ceremonies: NOT under care: YM = 2 (ATL = 0)

**Handbook Committee** (by Sharon Annis)

Hope to be able to present final Working Draft at YM 2013; Needs one more person to help with editing for the next few months.

**Report on SAYMA Insurance for Child Protection** (by Carol Nickle and Tim Lamm)

Note that Jonah McDonald from ATL is part of the committee working on this. Need Child Protection Policy in Place which would require background checks on all who work with children at YM. This required revising the Guide One Sexual Misconduct Policy. Long discussion about whether everyone who registers for YM needs to have background check then took place. Committee was asked to find another way to comply with requirement for background checks. Not sure what will happen at YM. Child Protection Policy presented which details how YM will protect its children from misconduct or inappropriate behavior while protecting staff and volunteers from false accusations.

**Next Representatives Meeting is to be held in Nashville, TN on September 27, 2013.**

You can read the entire March 2013 Representative Meeting Minutes (51 pages) at [http://sayma.org/top/online\\_documents.htm#YM](http://sayma.org/top/online_documents.htm#YM) Regis.

-- Respectfully Submitted, Free Polazzo  
May 19, 2013

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*Couple Enrichment Workshop, Nov. 1-3, Now Open for Registration*

Atlanta Meeting will hold a Couple Enrichment Workshop on November 1-3, Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, at the Meetinghouse. The Workshop, offered through Friends General Conference for over 40 years, is designed for committed couples to help nurture their relationships and hone good communication skills. At the heart of the program is building purposeful support within a couple and among couples with emphasis on trust and reflection. The program is not therapy but does provide tools for handling differing opinions and conflict in a constructive and loving manner. Confidentiality is emphasized.

The workshop is open to any adult couple from Meeting in a committed relationship of at least one year, and is limited to 8 couples, on a first-come first-served basis. Childcare will be provided by the Meeting's existing couples group. Cost will be \$175 per couple, but scholarships are available. For more information, contact Jim Tolmach & Sally Ferguson, 404-523-0683, or [sallyferguson@earthlink.net](mailto:sallyferguson@earthlink.net). Green registration forms are available on the table at the Meetinghouse entrance; deadline is September 30.

**Atlanta Monthly Meeting Response to the Kabarak Call**

Atlanta Friends Monthly Meeting unites with the Sixth World Conference of Friends' Kabarak Call for Peace and Eco-justice. This document reminds us that we are part of a world of Friends with ties to the issues presented. We sense there is a distinctive Quaker response to global change. This sense grows out of Friends' efforts to live out our lives through our testimonies to peace, truth, integrity and justice, now including eco-justice and care for the Earth. Our queries for eco-justice grow out of awareness of our profound connectedness to the natural world rather than from fear which scarcity or

change engenders. We set ourselves the task to ask: How do we articulate our individual spiritual responses to global disruption and what do we, as a worldwide faith community, have to say to ourselves and to the world?

Our leadings and actions in these concerns here in the Atlanta area included Minutes on Population & Consumption and Global Warming, many educational workshops, and efforts in lifestyle reduction of carbon emission footprints for our Meeting and as individuals. In recent years our discernment has led to more intensive interaction networking with others locally on 350.org climate action events, especially with Citizen Climate Lobby groups on way to affect market forces for promoting alternative clean energy.

As humanity turns to nourish ecological health through community, and not through conflict, what are we doing to keep conversations open with people who may differ from us on the care of the Earth, of Life, and of one another? What are we doing to nurture healthy relationships and community as we are called to be examples in a 21st century campaign for peace and ecojustice?

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**Atlanta Friends Meeting**  
**Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business**  
**June 16, 2013**  
**Recorded Pending Approval**

**Attendance:** Michael Allison, Paul Baker, Don Bender, Susan Firestone, Judith Greenberg, Roland Heath, Georgia Lord, Alison Mawle, Free Polazzo, Marthajane Robinson, Beth Ruddiman, Peter Sederberg, Joan Thompson, Jim Tolmach, Perry Treadwell, Caroline Noyes (Acting Clerk), Elizabeth Lamb (Recording Clerk) (17 Friends).

**Query:** Paul Baker presented the query: “How are Friends who feel called to ministry being nurtured and supported? How does our meeting deal with those among us who are called to a ministry or to travel among Friends?”

**Nominating Committee:** On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Beth Ruddiman brought forward for final approval Carol Grey to serve as clerk of the Hospitality Committee beginning in July.

**Minute 6-16-01:** On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Carol Grey as Clerk of the Hospitality Committee.

**Ministry and Worship:** On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Paul Baker reported that in the fifth month, Ministry and Worship announced to business meeting that we have received an application for membership from Coryn Murphy. A clearness committee has met with Coryn and discerned the rightness of membership. Ministry and Worship recommends that meeting receive Coryn Murphy into membership in our body. In keeping with our practice, we will bring this membership recommendation back to meeting in July for discernment and decision.

**Other Business:**

The question was raised asking why this Sixth Month’s business meeting was not rescheduled due to the SAYMA Yearly Meeting being held at the same time. Members reported that this conflict had been discussed at last month’s meeting and it had been decided that discernment is possible even in a small group. Thus it was deemed in the best interest of the Meeting to hold the meeting on schedule, especially since the Fourth Month’s meeting for business had been rescheduled due to another conflict.

Joan Thompson reported that the driveway at the Ferguson cabins had recently been improved and asked why the funds had been taken from the Ferguson Cabin Committee's account rather than the Capital Improvements account. Treasurer Peter Sederberg stated that the only invoice he had received was around \$100 for gravel and that our practice has been not to use the Capital Improvement account for such small amounts. To Joan's further report that grading had also been done, he replied that the Ferguson Cabin Committee would need to submit their request for funds to the Finance Committee for approval before he would be at liberty to use the funds in the Capital Improvement account.

**Minutes of April 2013:** The minutes from the April meeting were not published in the May newsletter, due to that meeting having been held a week later than normal. The minutes were published in the June newsletter and are thus being submitted for approval at this time. It was noted that Muireann Brennan's name was misspelled.

**Minute 6-16-02:** The minutes of the April 28, 2013 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business are approved as submitted.

**Minutes of May 2013:**

**Minute 6-16-03:** The minutes of the May 19, 2013 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business are approved as submitted.

Meeting closed with Silent Worship.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Lamb, Recording Clerk  
Caroline Noyes, Acting Clerk

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### *Report for Gathered Meeting Retreat*

The Atlanta Friends Meeting had a retreat on the weekend of April 19-21, 2013. In attendance were 50 adults and 15 children. Retreat leaders Lesly Fredman and Ginger Pyron led us in a workshop of creative play called "Playing in the Spirit." The activities allowed people to try things they often didn't do and to work together with others in fun, creative ways. People responded to the weekend well, saying that they were able to access different parts of themselves and were able to really relax through play. As Quakers, we found that many of us did not play enough, and found ourselves deepened through the process. In our free time, members had a wonderful time making hula hoops, hiking, star gazing, a hilarious variety show, and getting a chance to talk to each other more. The youngest of Friends (0-2) were provided with child care, and parents had a chance to enjoy a weekend with their children while enjoying some time apart, as well. In attendance were all the QVS volunteers who were very involved with the weekend through improvisation, volunteering with kids, and overall being a very positive presence. This was our second intergenerational workshop, and it was a big success. This was our first year to offer the option of camping, which 8 people took advantage of. We were within budget, and fun was had by all.

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## Calendar for Seventh Month (July) 2013

### Area Meetings for Worship

- Every First Day (Sunday), 10:00 a.m. – Meetinghouse, with a smaller group in the Library.  
Every First Day, 12:30 p.m. – Carrollton Friends Worship Group.  
St. Andrew's UMC Youth Center, 1106 Maple St.; Margaret Bray, 770-830-8705.  
Every Second and Fourth First Day, 10:00 a.m. – Canton Friends Worship Group.  
360 E. Marietta St.; 779-720-4669 or wrldpeas@mindspring.com.  
Every Second First Day, 10:30 a.m. -- Macon Friends Worship Group.  
Contact Diana Day, 478-227-8892; maconquakers.org.  
First Fifth Morning (Thursday) – AFSC office, 60 Walton St. NW, Atlanta.  
Every Fifth Day (Thursday) (except 1st of the month), 12:10 p.m. – East Lake Commons,  
Decatur. Contact Bert Skellie, 404-378-5883, bertskeillie@gmail.com.  
Sixth Day (Friday) (2<sup>nd</sup> week of August through May), 8:45 a.m. – Friends School of Atlanta.  
Community Meeting Room, 862 Columbia Dr., Decatur, 404-373-8746.

### Weekly Events at the Meetinghouse

- Every First Day (Sunday)  
9:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education, Library  
9:15 a.m. Singing, Classroom A/B  
10:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship  
Every Second - Fifth Day (Monday-Thursday)  
8:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. Smart Toddlers, Nursery playground  
Every Third Day (Tuesday)  
7:00 p.m. Silent Meditation, Library  
Every Fourth Day (Wednesday)  
7:00 p.m. Mid-Week Worship, Library  
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)  
7:30 p.m. Bible Study, Library

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Clerk of the Meeting: David Foster, afmclerk1@gmail.com  
Office Coordinator: Jonah McDonald, 404-377-2474

Treasurer: Peter Sederberg, afmtreasurer1@gmail.com  
Ministry & Worship: Bill Holland, 404-692-2358  
Finance: Paul Mangelsdorf, 770-677-4280  
Social Concerns: Michael Allison, 770-832-3539  
Care & Counsel: Don Bender, afm.care.counsel@gmail.com  
Religious Education: Alison Mawle, 404-944-9142

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ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING  
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**ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING**  
**701 West Howard Ave., Decatur, GA 30030**  
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**Office: MWF 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; afmquakers@hotmail.com**  
**Clerk: David Foster, afmclerk1@gmail.com**  
**Treasurer: Peter Sederberg, afmtreasurer1@gmail.com**

If you would like to have a permanent nametag made, leave a request in one of the baskets on the front table. Indicate whether you prefer one that hangs around the neck or that pins. When Carol Gray has made one for you, it will be placed in the black file box on the greeting table.

If you would like to be included in the AFM database and receive the Newsletter by mail and/or appear in future AFM Directories, please send your name and contact information to Nina Gooch at ninagooch@gmail.com or 404-371-9873. Please indicate if you want to be in the directory, receive the newsletter by mail, or both.

Contributions to the Atlanta Friends Meeting may be placed in the slot marked “Contributions” in the greeting area of the Meetinghouse or mailed to the Treasurer at the above address. Thank you!

*This newsletter is a publication of the Atlanta Friends Meeting. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Meeting.*

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**DEADLINE FOR 8<sup>TH</sup> MONTH NEWSLETTER:  
JULY 20**

Readers are encouraged to submit letters, articles, notices and anything else of interest to Friends. Items should be sent directly to atlquakerltr@gmail.com **in plain text in the body of the email. Texts may be edited for length and format. Pictures should be in .jpg format.**