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GNA Connections

by Noah Baker Merrill

In ministry, relationships are vital. Like the circulation of blood in the body, God uses the relationships we nurture to spread nourishment that brings new life, often in amazing and unexpected ways. And in my experience, relationships are what Goods News Associates is all about.

Last fall, I sat in worshipful silence with the board and Associates of GNA as we listened to a recording of Eden Grace, who serves with Friends United Meeting in Kenya, [speaking to New England Yearly Meeting](#). Her words, as she begged forgiveness on behalf of all Christians for the ways we have not acted and lived in the Love of Christ, lost nothing in having been recorded and first heard on the other side of the continent.

I was brought back to my own experience of holding her in prayer as she spoke those words at our yearly meeting gathering in 2011. A wave of grace and gratitude swept over me, as I recognized the threads of faithfulness that had made this ministry possible.

Jan Wood's ministry of reconciliation among Friends served as the quiet inspiration for Eden to take this courageous step, as our yearly meeting sought a new way in our relationships with other Quaker brothers and sisters and with each other. She modelled the love of the Jesus she knows in a community ready for healing and newness. Hearts were changed. No one could have anticipated the fruits of these Friends' faithfulness. But I can testify to the continuing fruits of this work of Love.



Jan Wood

I know this is not an isolated experience. One of the greatest gifts for me in traveling in the ministry in recent years has been the opportunity to see the ways God is at work below the surface, weaving the threads of faithfulness among Quakers today. Across our divisions of theology, culture and geography, God is doing a new thing among us *as a People*. And at so many of the intersections of these threads, people like you who are part of the GNA family are present.



Lon & Raelene Fendall

My time as a Good News Associate draws to a close at the end of 2012, as I answer a call to a new shape of ministry serving among Friends in New England Yearly Meeting. But it feels important to share with the wider community of prayer and support – you who help make Good News Associates what it is – just some of the ways I have glimpsed the threads of your faithfulness through supporting the ministries of GNA in the last year.

At the World Conference of Friends in Kenya last April, I met person after person who has been affected by the ministry of Lon and Raelene Fendall amongst African Friends. Looking across the crowded auditorium where we gathered at Kabarak University, I also recognized the vital service of GNA board member Jonathan Vogel-Borne, who served as



Jonathan Vogel-Borne



Marge Abbott

Treasurer for the Conference and in countless other ways; his lifelong ministry of holding the whole community of Friends in the unity of God continues. Board member Marge Abbott's service clerking the committee writing the multilingual Epistle and gathering the diverse perspectives of Friends on prophetic ministry further amplified the witness of GNA at the World Gathering.

At the Atlanta launch of [Quaker Voluntary Service](#) in September, I visited seven young adults dedicating a year of their lives to deepening their journeys of faith and coming alongside local communities in loving service. GNA's guidance and support has been vital in helping this new ministry be born. And when we dreamed together about how we could support Friends called to non-institutional ministries, GNA's model kick-started our conversation about what was possible for a new generation of those testing a call to ministry in our tradition.

As Marge and others encourage Quaker Voluntary Service in opening a cross-Quaker-branch service house in Portland, Oregon next year, I see the threads of GNA's matchmaking continuing the faithful work of so many in the Pacific Northwest. Through the [Women's Theology Conference](#) and in so many other ways, they are lifting up an example for the rest of the Quaker world about building bridges of loving relationship and life-giving engagement across communities of Friends.

Whether through Jan Wood and Lon Fendall offering the [Leadership Institute for Group Discernment](#) on the West Coast; or Marge Abbott and myself co-leading a workshop on prophetic ministry in Philadelphia; or Chris Hall, Jan, Marge, and I joining others to offer the [Way of the Spirit](#), the partnerships and blessed matchmaking of God through GNA enrich the work of Christ in the world in powerful ways.



Christine Betz Hall

As Margaret Fraser comes on board as an Associate, and Jonathan Vogel-Borne and his wife Minga take the next steps in their journey of public ministry, each bringing their deep and rich networks of connection and relationship, the energy and possibility for what God is continuing to do through the relationships that make up GNA grows even greater.



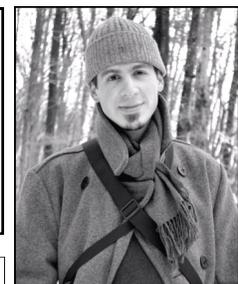
Margaret Fraser

In so many places where I see new Life emerging in the Religious Society of Friends in our time, Good News is present: empowering, equipping, liberating, reconciling, connecting, partnering, inviting us into newness. Many of us may not see the fruits everyday. But that's not what matters. It's the relationships, and the gifts enabled to work through them, that are transforming our Quaker communities, and reaching beyond to a world thirsting for living water.

I give thanks to God for the opportunity to share with these Friends in the journey of faithfulness. Thank you for your support of each one of us as we continue on this journey of ministry together.

Query: These reflections are just some of the ways GNA has served in the last year. Where have you seen signs of new life being nurtured through relationships with GNA?

Noah Baker Merrill is a member of Putney Friends Meeting in Southern Vermont, a monthly meeting of New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). He seeks to follow in the living Quaker tradition of service and travel in *gospel ministry* – the practical spiritual work of building relationships, encouraging faithfulness, and participating in Love's work of awakening hearts. Putney Meeting has named Noah a *Released Friend*, freeing him to be available for this service as he is led by the Holy Spirit. He is a founding member of [Quaker Voluntary Service](#) and a GOOD NEWS *Associate*. Beginning in 2013, he will serve as Secretary for New England Yearly Meeting.



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