

## **Overcome Our Judgmentalism**

I read the article, “Queer Quaker Kinship,” with sadness (*Western Friend*, Nov/Dec 2017). Mainly I’m sad to be reminded of what LGBTQ people suffer, even within our own Society of Friends. But I have another sorrow as a person who has been called to encourage greater understanding among all four branches of Friends: Liberal (that’s us), Conservative, Friends Church, and Evangelical. Northwest Yearly Meeting is Evangelical, but the quote from their Faith and Practice is just one side of them. NWYM’s stand on gays is hurtful, and putting homosexuality in the same category with incest is wrong on so many levels. It’s incorrect because being an LBBTQ isn’t morally wrong. Their statement is also unethical because it’s judgmental. It’s wrong to judge others. Jesus said, “Don’t judge” (Matthew, Chapter Seven). It distresses me that we tend to judge them for making that statement. It’s even easier to fall into the trap of judgmentalism because the statement is taken out of the context of who Evangelical Friends are.

First of all, they are Friends. I’m reminded of a man that I met at the Annual Gathering of the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest. He had grown up in another denomination but liked being part of a Friends Church because it was nonmaterialistic. I was attending as an observer from Pacific Yearly Meeting. I have fond memories of meeting with Friends from the EFCSW. Although I was never officially acknowledged, on a personal level I was welcomed and my sharing with people appreciated. An Evangelical Friend provided hospitality the year the gathering was held in Citrus Heights, California. We had a nice conversation, and when she drove me back to the church Saturday morning, she called me, “Sis.”

I remember a few scenes from their Annual Gathering of 2016. A young couple, Joe and Cara Pfeiffer shared their experiences as missionaries in Indonesia. Joe said they did their work with an awareness of the negative legacy of colonialism. Their main goal is to develop leadership of the Indonesians themselves. In fact, the Pfeiffers only spent part of the year overseas. I also attended a session by Jim Heaton, pastor of Sacramento Friends Church on how to support members of the meeting with mental illness – something I haven’t encountered in PYM. There are Spanish-speaking and Chinese-speaking congregations within EFCSW. Why don’t we have more people of color?

We could learn some things from Evangelical Friends. But first, we need to overcome our own judgmentalness.

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