

Adult First Day Program Notes – 24 April 2022

This week Tampa Friends read the Friends Journal article *T A Statement of Christian Pacifism* by Lloyd Lee Wilson for our Adult First Day Program. This article, by a weighty Friend from the Conservative branch of Quakerism, outlined four reasons why the author's faith as a Christian automatically made him a pacifist. His first reason involved lust which he defines as "the intense desire for those things that I do not have and which it would be wrong for me to possess." Given that he has been freed from lust through Christ, Wilson states that he no longer has a reason to make war. Wilson's second reason for being a pacifist is Christ's command to Peter, who wanted to defend Christ through violence, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." (Matt. 26:52). Wilson takes Christ's command to Peter to apply to all Christians. Wilson's third reason is that "war is counterproductive..." as "The cessation of outward fighting at the end of any war already always contains the seeds of the next war." And finally, Wilson's fourth reason is he found that becoming a Christian was transformational for him, as he was given "a new life, with a new spirit and a new heart – a new desire to do God's will and a new strength to do it." He therefore found he could echo George Fox's statement of "living in that life and power that takes away the occasion of war..."

Wilson places his trust in God rather than military defenses. He understands how his pacifist position may seem to result in apparent failure in the eyes of the world, but as he states, "The standard for Christians is always faithfulness, not success." Wilson further reminds us that a key vision of God's Kingdom is Jubilee, "a periodic redistribution of wealth, to prevent some people from staying wealthy at the expense of others." Given that we are also to love God and our neighbors, we are not to wage war against anyone for any reason: "There is never a special situation that justifies participation in war for Christians. In Christ we have become new people indeed, and in God we really do trust." This clear statement of a pacifist resonated with some Friends. Others stated trying to live this out but given the definition of a pacifist included not using violence in any situation, struggled with questions such as are economic sanctions acts of violence and so to be avoided? Does this rule out violence in defending oneself or those who are too vulnerable to? Questions requiring further reflection and discernment.