

History of Our Participation in the Visalia Times Delta Pastor's Column

By David Chandler

In the spring of 2001 I started an unexpected chain of events by writing an article called “Who are the Quakers” and sending it to the local paper. The editor referred it to the religion page. The religion editor didn’t run it, but invited us to participate in the rotation with other local churches to write the “Pastor’s Column.” Not having a pastor we hadn’t thought to inquire about the possibility, but once the opportunity was offered it made sense. Why should not having a pastor deter us? Aren’t we all ministers, as the occasion arises? This seemed like a good opportunity to let people in our community know who we are and what we are about in a deeper way.

I wrote the first article in the summer of 2001 (giving a Biblical basis to reject the death penalty) and submitted it on schedule only to have it rejected as being too political. (This is a VERY conservative community dominated by religious fundamentalism.) The paper had turned over the task of organizing the Pastor’s Column to one of the fundamentalist churches on the list. We went back and forth in correspondence and phone calls with the liaison and the religion editor arguing the merits of our perspective on spirituality, generating more heat than light. Bill Lovett and Greg Seastrom, our clerk at the time, arranged to meet with the editors and discuss the issues face to face and came away with somewhat improved, but still tense relations. In the next cycle we submitted a reflection on the story of the Good Samaritan, which was printed without incident. We were off and running.

Once the dust had settled, I resubmitted the Death Penalty article two years later, with a new title, and it was printed without incident. Any who want to participate are encouraged to submit articles. We ask that the first drafts be submitted several months in advance of the due date at Meeting for Business. The draft is read; people comment. Over the next month or two changes are made to address the concerns of others, and in the end an article is adopted to speak for the meeting as a whole. This process is a valuable part of the writing process. As one who has submitted my writing to this process several times, I find that the dialogue greatly strengthens my own writing.