

Dear Friends,

Attached is the article I found in my mother's papers about which I spoke in Meeting today. It is a modern enactment of the parable of the talents, and speaks to what can be done together with the right leading. I am trying to remember the Hubbard squash seeds. Did they arrive in my childhood, sixty years ago? I am not sure. I surely remember Margaret Wentworth as a stalwart Friend during my adult years at Yearly Meeting. -- Rachel Cogbill

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

or

THE FRIENDS SQUASH PIE PROJECT

by Richard Wood

Times Record Contributor

One Sunday morning, last March, a member of Durham Friends Meeting was giving the children's message on the parable of the talents. Almost as an afterthought, he reached into his pocket and said, "I've got three pennies here. Anyone who wishes is welcome to take them home and see what they can develop out of those three cents." The last person to leave the meetinghouse that day saw the three pennies still lying forlornly on the little table at the front and scooped them up.

Now it is a given, in the world in which we live, that three cents doesn't go very far. It is equally true, however, that enthusiastic investment attracts more capital. The Friend who scooped up the three pennies found a lonely penny in a pants pocket and yet another sitting on top of the clothes dryer. The next day a whole nickel arrived in the mail, kindness of The Reader's Digest. Obviously, greater forces were at work here.

With the freshly swollen capital, our entrepreneur went to Brook's Feed and Farm Supply, thinking to buy some ornamental seeds, to get some seedlings to sell in a spring yard sale for a quick turnover. Unhappily, that sort of seed only came in packets costing \$.85, way out of reach. The entrepreneur explained the situation to store manager Gary Brooks, who was intrigued by the project. Together, they hit upon Hubbard squash, an eighth of an ounce by \$.10. An eighth of an ounce came to eight seeds. Gary thought ten seeds would be better and contributed accordingly. (Yet another example of capital rushing to a popular investment.)

At home, the capitalist scouted up some used cottage cheese and yogurt containers, filled them with left over potting soil, planted two seeds per container, watered them faithfully, and, in due course, was rewarded with five sturdy hills of squash. These were planted out in a neglected corner of the year and, by frost, had rewarded the steward with approximately one hundred pounds of ripe squash. This had a farmers' market value of about twenty cents per pound, not a bad return in six months, on a project launched with three cents, even if it isn't all pure profit.

At this point the steward took the project bake to the Meeting, as an item on the agenda of a family night program. The popular investment once again attracted fresh capital, and it was determined that anyone who was willing would take home a squash and make as many pies as they could with it for sale at the Durham Friends Youth Group Yard Sale on Saturday, Oct. 12. The squash were all lugged off. Pies will be available by the slice (with coffee), and by the pie.

We have no idea where this will take us. We may donate the proceeds from the pies to some worthy cause, still to be determined. We might decide to split the proceeds among the members and see what each one can develop from his share of capital by the anniversary of the original three-cent endowment. All this is yet to be decided. We are keeping the see from the biggest squash. In any event, some cause the Meeting membership agrees on will benefit from the project.

Regardless of what happens, two things have become clear to us. First, in the Lord's work, significant ventures can be successfully undertaken even though enough funds may not appear to be available. Second, everyone's gift, regardless of how meager it may seem, is important. We dare not fall into the trap of feeling our gift is too small to be of any use. If we all took that line, nothing would ever get accomplished.

Note accompanying the article:

Dear Friends,

Durham Monthly Meeting has so thoroughly enjoyed the challenge described above that we want to share it with you. The squash turned into 40 pies, which, in due course, turned into \$130. The largest squash contained nearly 600 seeds.

The money, except for a bit for postage, is going to our Emergency Relief Fund. The seeds are being sent to all Meetings and Worship Groups in NEYM. Enclosed are your 10 Blue Hubbard seeds. What you do with these "talents" is up to you. We hope you will find this project as rewarding and stimulating as we have!

Durham Meeting is delighted to be able to send you these seeds, and our warm greetings.

Peace,

Margaret Wentworth

Clerk, Ministry and Counsel, Durham Monthly Meeting