

Simplify Life Garage Sale

Why This Sale?

Friends (often known as Quakers) believe in simplicity and have witnessed to that testimony since the days when they wore simple unadorned (often grey) clothing. At other times some Friends wore undyed clothing because the dye was produced by slave labor. Because Friends believe that there is "that of God" in all people, Friends recognized early the impossibility of "owning" another human being.

Lest we think that all these issues are something only of the past, we have only to take a look at the labels in the garments we are wearing and the shoes on our feet. Were they produced in sweatshops under deplorable conditions in Third World countries?

Simplicity is not just a matter of conviction. It is also a matter of spiritual concern. Consider these words by Caroline Stephen:

"In life, as in art, whatever does not help, hinders. All that is superfluous to the main object of life must be cleared away, if that object is to be fully obtained. In all kinds of effort, whether moral, intellectual, or physical, the essential condition of vigor is a severe pruning away of redundancies."

Many Friends have noticed a "lightening" effect when reducing their material possessions. Clearly, a cleaner, more organized household helps one to feel centered. Other Friends have noted that they feel increased energy.

Where Do The Proceeds of the Sale Go?

The proceeds of this garage sale go to an independent Quaker organization, Right Sharing of World Resources, which provides grants to support innovative income-generating, awareness-building and environmental-regeneration projects in the developing world.

The Sale

Months Ahead

1. Plan several months in advance to allow folks to organize goods and save up items for sale.
2. Use notices in the meeting newsletter, using a quote or query regarding simplicity, equality or peace, followed by a reminder of the coming garage sale.
3. Writing of simplicity, Thomas Kelly reminds us, 'Life is meant to be lived from the center, a divine center, a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time.'
4. For many of us, the Christmas holiday season is packed with responsibilities, activities, social obligations, financial pressure, and often a strong pulling away from that center. Now, as I put away the holiday decorations, I am aware of wanting to simplify my life. And I struggle toward the concept of enough.
5. In May we 'll put on a 'Simplify Life Garage Sale.' Begin thinking now about setting aside things you no longer need or want. The garage sale not only benefits those who purchase items at low cost, it benefits us as we raise money for Right Sharing of World Resources and as we de-clutter our home, freeing us of some of the weight of matter surrounding us, freeing us to return to the simple, serene center.
6. Set a date. We used two days because we had lots of stuff and enough help to hold the sale for two days. Friday and Saturday work best. Die-hard garage sale folks come early on Fridays. We chose to quit by 1:00 pm; most of our customers came in the morning.
7. Find a coordinator. Request that people tell the coordinator of special-interest items to be listed in the newspaper ad for the sale. Consider non-traditional items for sale, such as indoor or outdoor plants (especially in the spring). Antiques of any kind are a draw.

8. Put the ad in the paper. We noted that the proceeds went to RSWR and that we were Quakers, simplifying our lives. It became an unusual form of outreach to the community.
9. Arrange for someone who has a truck and a strong back to pick up large items the week of the sale.
10. Put up a sign-up list of shifts to work the sale. You will need people to sort, price, organize the display, sell items, and clean up afterwards. Allow 2-8 hours to sort and price items. The more organized and attractively displayed items are, the more will be sold.
11. Have a garage sale box of supplies (hammer, nails, markers, bags, safety pins, scissors, stickers and a cash box). Have lots of change.
12. Arrange for cleanup and boxing so unsold items can be picked up by a local thrift store.

Day of the Sale

1. Arrive early (someone will be there to buy things even earlier).
2. Provide literature about RSWR, Quakers and simplicity. This is a good opportunity to advertise voluntary simplicity groups in your community.
3. Enjoy the benefits of "en-light-en-ment" and send a check to RSWR!

Contact our office for support and more information:

RSWR, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374
Phone: 765.966.0314
rswr@rswr.org