

Worcester Friends Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)

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February/March 2016

QUERIES

Do you “live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars”? Do you faithfully maintain Friends’ testimony against military preparations and all participation in war, as inconsistent with the teachings and spirit of Christ? Do you strive to increase understanding and use of non-violent methods of resolving conflicts?

~ Faith and Practice of NEYM, 1985

From the Editor

by Katie Green

Our Quaker faith encourages us to experience the world and our lives fully, integrating our Faith and Actions. Although I grew up being taught that “religion” is not the same thing as going to church on Sunday, I have learned that we – each and every one of us – live our faith every day. As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we are fortunate to have the words Gifts and Leadings in our vocabulary.

Friends are encouraged to help each other recognize and share our God-given Gifts with our Community. We can ask Friends for a clearness committee to hold us as we explore a leading. We ponder thoughts such as Is this a leading, an attractive distraction, or a groping for attention/recognition? How does this leading fit into my life as an individual, a family member, and a member of my community? We are challenged to find balance as we use our gifts and seek to walk in the Light.

I feel fortunate to have a life that allows me to ponder these dilemmas. Many people, all too many people, struggle to stay alive. I pray that I can be clear thinking enough to spend my remaining time in joyful prayer, sharing and recognizing our gifts. For some time, now, I’ve been praying to realign my gifts with the needs of the Meeting.

I have been fortunate to have edited the Worcester Friends Meeting’s newsletter for the past eight (Yes! Eight!) years. Some of us lightened Betty Jones’ work as editor when we realized that the digital age made her life more complicated and less enjoyable. Betty provided the newsletter with Queries for several years after she stopped editing the newsletter, and I feel blessed to have followed her.

Many Friends contribute articles for the newsletter, and this makes it a valuable part of our meeting. We evaluate and reevaluate the size, the method, and the expense of producing the newsletter. At this time, Sheila Brenner will be stepping in to assist and perhaps take over the editing of the newsletter. Sheila has much more experience editing than I had when I first started to help Betty Jones. I’m sure that Friends will continue to enjoy our attempts at communication and sharing the Light.

First Day School

by Katie Green

If you have attended Meeting for Worship at the Worcester Friends Meeting recently, you most likely noticed that shortly after 11 o'clock, a large number of young people leave the room to attend First Day School on the third floor. The committee on Spiritual Life has suggested that they return to meeting for worship for the last ten minutes so that they might hear some oral ministry during worship sharing at the end of meeting of worship.

Our Quaker Youth group has become a major part of the foundation of the meeting. They care about each other and enjoy their time together.

After attending an open house at the Worcester Islamic Center on East Mountain Street in Worcester, the children expressed a desire to learn more about other religions. Some of the children visited St Joseph's Abbey in Spencer last month. On March 6, they attend the service

at All Saints Episcopal on Irving Street, and on April 24th, they will be at the Belmont AME Zion Church. They also plan to visit The Saints Francis and Therese Catholic Worker community to attend prayer service there on a Wednesday evening and to learn more about the Catholic Worker community. Friend Geoff Knowlton has given the children some valuable insights about the Bible, and they continue to learn more about Quaker history, faith and practice.

Our First Day School is fortunate to have Maye Costello-Walsh as our First Day School assistant and child care provider for the nursery when we have little ones. Katherine Barnard, Katie Green, and Tyler Green are thankful for the opportunity to serve on the First Day School Committee.

Quarterly Meeting Report

by Daron Barnard

On the 20th day of the third month, Friends gathered at Smithfield Meeting House for Quarterly Meeting. Betsy Cazden gave a presentation on the Friends World Committee on Consultation international meeting held January, 2016 in Peru. Business meeting began with silence and a reading on integrity, followed by discussions focused on ways that we could get to know each other. It was clear that those present want to understand the Quarter's role in the life of the monthly meeting, and that this role will rely on the strength of connections between our monthly meetings. Other business included approval of a Travel minute for Betsy Cazden for her travel to Cuba, and a report from Permanent Board. Worcester Friends who traveled to Quarterly Meeting Meeting for Business were Fred Mikkelsen, Clarence Burley, and myself. Katharine and Malcolm were present for worship as well.

Next Quarterly meeting will be the third Sunday in June (June 19th) at Westerly Meeting.

And Still We Rise - 7:00 Pm Saturday, April 9

The Worcester Friends Meeting will co-sponsor a theatrical event with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester. ***And Still We Rise*** is a collaborative theater production dedicated to healing, public awareness and social change through empowering the voices of formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones. This event will take place at **7:00 PM on Saturday, April 9** at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester, 90 Holden Street. It is partially funded by the Worcester Arts Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Commission.



Mary Chenaille and Karen Sargent went to the Sessions Committee meeting in Framingham on Jan. 23, 2016. The meeting started at 8:30 with coffee, tea and some amazingly delicious snacks provided by some generous members of Framingham meeting. Kathleen Wooten took minutes. We were trying to finish early because of a snowstorm that threatened to make travel difficult for those returning to Rhode Island, Connecticut and perhaps even Worcester.

Sessions will be at Castleton State College in Castleton, Vermont again this year. Castleton will again be hosting the football event that results in having a Shriner's parade on Sat. afternoon. This happened last year and the college and the Sessions committee are both better

prepared to make the changes needed so that we can enjoy the parade without disruption to yearly Meeting Sessions.

There will again be a contra-dance, although it is still not clear which musicians and caller will be engaged. There will be adult and family bookstores as well as a consignment shop where F/friends can sell goods they make, although the location may change. Sessions depends on volunteers to drive carts, sell books and consignments, carry trays, help with children, and many other opportunities. Ask Mary C. or Karen for more info and watch the New England Yearly meeting website and newsletter for registration info.

Breaking Down the Box

Worcester Friends Meeting's Peace & Social Concerns Committee showed a film on Friday, February 19th at 7 P.M. Breaking Down the Box. The film is a 40-minute documentary, which exposes the torture of solitary confinement in the context of mass incarceration in the United States.

Produced by film maker Matthew Gossage, the film examines the mental health, racial justice and human rights implications of the systemic use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons. It is a call to action for communities of faith to engage in the growing nationwide movement for restorative alternatives to isolated confinement that prioritize rehabilitation, therapeutic interventions, and recovery.

The event, sponsored by the Peace/Social Concerns & Outreach Committee, was well attended and included

a lively and informative discussion. Participants signed letters to State Representatives asking that they support legislation that will reduce incarceration and make it easier for released prisoners to re-enter society.

BREAKING DOWN THE BOX

A documentary exposing the torture of solitary confinement
and calling the faith community to action



If you have somehow escaped seeing JonWatts' QuakerSpeak videos, you can remedy that!! Go to <http://www.quakerspeak.com> right now and catch up on Friends talking about what being a Quaker means to them.

Stephen Collins - *A Search for Justice*



Stephen Collins, actor, lecturer, teacher and tourguide, presented his program, *A Search for Justice*, on Friday evening, March 4th at the meetinghouse. This event concluded the spoken word series that was funded by the Worcester Arts Council grant for 2014. A sudden snow squall - a white-out - interfered with the attendance last year, but this time, we were more fortunate. Six people came to this performance, and they were all Worcester Friends.

Stephen Collins' performance, as usual, was polished and eloquent. We had a 20 minute discussion following the show. A fine time was enjoyed by all present.

Friends encouraged Stephen to become familiar with John Woolman.

Jeff Halper Spoke About the Middle East

by Mary Bennett

All chairs were filled on March 9th when Jeff Halper, the former head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, spoke at our Meeting House about his new book "War Against the People." Jeff discussed how Israel has become the most militarized country in the world, exporting 2 1/2 trillion dollars a year of arms and technology they have been using to maintain an apartheid system which denies basic human rights to the Palestinian people. He argued that Israel is having so much success selling these methods, other countries are no longer willing to condemn the treatment of the Palestinians. He warned that these same methods are now being used in other countries, including the United States by police departments in Ferguson and elsewhere.

The Telegram and Gazette had a feature story and Clive McFarland wrote a column discussing the issues and our Meeting House was mentioned as the host of this important event.



Guns Do Not Make Us Safe ~ A Monthly Vigil

Worcester Friends Meeting is one of the sponsors of a monthly vigil to "Expose the Lies that Prop Up the Gun Culture." The next vigil will be across the street from The Gun Parlor at 170 Prescott Street from 12:30 to 1:30 PM on Saturday, April 16. The presence of a firearm in a home is a danger, not a protection. A gun in the home increases the chance of being killed by firearms 72%. It increases the likelihood of suicide fivefold, and triples the risk of a homicide. Having a gun in the home is responsible for the vast majority of children killed by firearms. An abused woman is six times more likely to be murdered if there is a gun in the home. This vigil is sponsored by our Meeting, The Francis and Therese Catholic Worker, Little Franciscans of Mary, and the Center for Nonviolent Solutions.

Couple Enrichment Weekend In May

by Katie Green



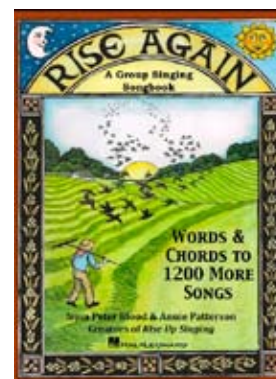
Couple Enrichment Weekend from May 6 to May 8 at Friends Camp in China, Maine. Several Worcester Friends have had the opportunity to focus on their relationships and enhance communication skills. The workshop introduces a method that provides space and time for people to listen carefully and lovingly to each other. The workshop is open to all couples in a committed relationship, regardless of sexual orientations, marital status, or religious affiliation.. I especially found the weekend's learning applicable to any situation where there's a potential misunderstanding, whether it's in a marriage or a Meeting. Talk with the Mikkelsens or the Green/Stones for more information or email Jacob and Gretta at jdsfrombucks@gmail.com

Welcoming a New Song Book

by Katie Green

The Green/Stone family and the Mikkelsens enjoyed a weekend of singing with Annie Patterson and Peter Blood at Woolman Hill in February. The Quaker retreat center was filled to the max to celebrate Peter and Annie's new song book: *Rise Again*. Groups all over the U.S. have been singing together with the help of their first book, *Rise Up Singing*, which was published in 1988 and has sold about one million copies. The new book has the same format, with an additional 1200 songs.

See Peter and Annie's Quaker Speak you tube at:
<https://www.riseupandsing.org/anniepeter/bios/quakers>



Thoughts...

Our life is love and peace and tenderness, and bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, . . . and praying for one another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Isaac Penington – to Friends in Amersham

Quaker Chuckles

How many Quakers does it take to change a light bulb? None - they use the Inner Light

A newcomer at Quaker Meeting whispered to Friend sitting nearby: "When does the service begin?" The Friend answered: "When meeting for worship is over."

Several members of the Worcester meeting have become involved with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). AVP was started in 1975 inside the Greenhaven State Prison in New York State when a group of men asked a Quaker worship group to help them deal with the violence in their lives. Together, they created the first AVP workshop. Since that time, AVP workshops are found in 33 states, 45 countries, and have become an integral method of reconciliation in major conflicts. AVP is meant for incarcerated people, gangs, homeless people, families, everybody.

AVP is a volunteer program that can change the way we define and experience conflict and violence. Although it originated with Quakers, the program is not evangelistic. Many of the facilitators are not members of the Religious Society of Friends, but do embrace the Quaker belief that there is good in each of us.

Here in Worcester County, we are looking forward to bringing AVP methods of communication and conflict resolution into our communities and our daily lives. An AVP mini workshop will be held this fall at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Holden Street, Worcester. Please see Jane Cutting, Katie Green, or Matthew



Shorten for more information. The following quotes were spontaneously generated by incarcerated men during AVP workshops:

"I want you to know that every little grain of knowledge you share with us is not in vain. We will eventually use one of these tools in here and pass it on to our kids, our grandkids."

-Jimmy Jam

"I've been inside for thirty-four years. I had 250 tickets for violence in the first twelve years, and I dug myself a big hole. AVP changed my life. I don't like AVP; I love AVP. AVP gave me tools."

- Diligent Dave

"I thought this would be boring. We'd come here and get talked at and be given lots of papers, - but we came here and communicated with each other and had fun."

-Yes Yess

"We had mutual respect in a short time - and we were able to discuss deep things right from the start."

-Mighty Mark

"I feel as though a weight has been lifted off of me."

- Merciful Musa

"This is just the beginning. Now we got to use the positive to touch someone else."

- Wise Woody

Book Review

by Katie Green

Worcester peace activists have long been inspired by the work of Claire and Scott Schaeffer-Duffy. Now we have an opportunity to know them at a more intimate level. Scott Schaeffer-Duffy has published a delightful memoir that David O'Brien calls "A book by an activist about things that matter that will make readers smile as well as think."

Scott's book, *Nothing Is Impossible*, is a delightful read that is written just as the author speaks: joyfully, descriptively, with no holding back. We sit on the edge of the chair as we read this book that can be started at any chapter. We follow Scott as he struggles to fit into the life of a Franciscan monk, explores a haunted house, falls in love, and is arrested for "crimes of conscience". His contagious sense of humor and his vulnerability bring us closer to understanding and loving this unusual man who has run marathons and also danced between warring armies in a clown suit. Watch for an announcement of Scott reading from his book at our meetinghouse in the near future.



Art for and from Friends



Turtle line drawing by
Maye Costello-Walsh.

Happenings

The Center for Nonviolent Solutions will host another social hour at the Sahara Restaurant on Pleasant Street at 5:30 PM, Tuesday, April 19. Wendy O'Leary will speak on Mindfulness Instruction in Schools. These events include good discussions with concerned people.

Sandy Kocher's artwork will be exhibited during the month of April at the Barre Savings Bank at 713 Pleasant Street in Paxton. There will be an Opening from 3:00 to 5:00 PM on Thursday, April 7.

Monthly Meeting for Worship with attention to Business

Monthly Meeting for Worship with attention to Business

Date: February 14, 2016

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Mary Bennett, Clarence Burley, Mary Chenaille, Jane Cutting, Fred Mikkelson, Aaron Sakulich, Karen Sargent, Mark Sullivan

Clerking: Daron Barnard

The meeting opened with silence and reading from NEYM Faith and Practice, Query 2, Meeting for Worship. It is noted that this query, which prompts us to consider the role and the expression of the Divine in all aspects of the Meeting, is in line with our recent State of Society discussion.

Items for consideration:

1. We have been offered a visit to the Meeting by Jeff Halper, a global peace activist whose work includes Palestinian rights, black lives matter, and labor group work. The Meeting agrees to welcome him for a discussion of his work on the evening of Wednesday, March 9, 2016, in lieu of mid-week worship. Mary Bennett will coordinate the event.

2. Catholic Worker is organizing regular vigils in opposition outside the newly-established gun shop and shooting range in Worcester. The Business Meeting is in agreement that Worcester Friends Meeting be listed as a supporter of these events.

Treasurer's report: Accounting through January shows no unanticipated income or expenses.

Committee Reports:

Practical:

- The committee discussed priorities for 2016, and will bring large expenses for consideration by the Meeting as they come up.

- The committee responded to the recent fire inspection report and has supplied most of the missing items, and is working on replacing the batteries for the emergency lighting system.

- We welcomed a large donation of books and DVDs to be sold at Market Day.

- The Meeting asks the committee to consider replacement or revision of the heating system which has failed annually for the past three years on the coldest winter days, potentially with a greener alternative. It is noted that this year, bursting pipes has thus far been averted by raising the ambient temperature in the basement.

Spiritual Life:

- In January, a discussion was held for preparation of the State of Society report. As a discussion guide, we used queries supplied by NEYM to reflect on how the Divine is present and expressed in our Meeting. The State of Society report will be drafted by Spiritual Life Committee and brought to next Business Meeting for consideration. It will be sent out by email prior to Business Meeting.

- We learned about the SAGE program for visiting Friends in need and assisting in advance planning for end of life. We considered how to bring this valuable program to the Meeting, both on an individual and a group level. We are reminded that, during individual visits, the most pertinent question is, "What can I do for you today?" The program also lends itself to a discussion group, which feels aligned with our desire to know each other more deeply and to share our stories and our journeys. Mary Chenaille and others will make specific plans.

- There was discussion on midweek worship, and, though attendance is slim, it seems to be worthwhile for those who do attend. The Meeting will support it to continue and encourage attendance.

- Clerking the committee this year will be Geoff Knowlton.

PSCO:

- Events planning: This year's movie series will be kicked off on Friday February 19, 2016, by a showing and discussion of "Breaking Down the Box", a documentary on solitary confinement. The first spoken word event will be held on Friday March 11, 2016; Steve Collins will share words of peace and justice figures.

- Several Meeting members attended a MLK Day event on structural racism in the city and its schools.

- There was a discussion of ways to link with and support others in the community working on issues of race, refugee assistance, and supporting LGBT asylum-seekers. The need is great and the Meeting is open to finding ways to help, including continuing collection of winter gear for Syrian refugees via NuDay Syria.

The meeting closed with silence.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Barnard

Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Monthly Meeting for Worship with attention to Business

Date: March 11, 2016

Present: Daron Barnard, Katharine Barnard, Mary Bennett, Clarence Burley, Mary Chenaille, Jane Cutting, Fred Mikkelson, Matthew Shorten, Mark Sullivan

Clerking: Daron Barnard

The meeting opened with silence and a reading from NEYM Faith and Practice, Query 3: Meeting for Business.

Items for consideration:

1. State of Society report. The Meeting approves the report as submitted and the Clerk will bring it to Quarterly Meeting next week and will submit it to the Yearly Meeting as well. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to crafting this report, and to our Meeting community.

2. Request for support for the local campaign for \$15 minimum wage ("Fight For \$15"). Reverend Jose Encarnacion of the Christian Community Church, and chair of Worcester Interfaith Coalition, has sent a letter seeking corporate and individual support for this coalition effort. The Meeting approves being listed as a co-signer of the coalition's letter to the City of Worcester.

3. The Meeting agrees to send a letter of welcome to the incoming pastor of the First Baptist Church of Worcester, Reverend Brent Newberry, who will be installed on Sunday April 10.

4. The Meeting approves use of the Meetinghouse by Matthew Shorten's shintaido group on the afternoon of Saturday March 19.

Treasurer's report:

The treasurer reports that income is running slightly ahead of budget and there were no unanticipated expenses. Consequently, we are running near budget. An annual report of total assets will be forthcoming.

Committee Reports:

1. Practical

a. Buildings and Grounds issues were discussed and followed up, including front door lock, window replacements (kitchen and back hall), safety equipment, landscaping and roofing items. The committee is requested to also consider the attic window for replacement.

b. Discussion continued about the driveway project.

c. The piano will be removed as previously approved.

d. Market Day committee requests discontinuation of the "white elephant" table. All household items in that donation repository will be donated to Ascentria to furnish homes for refugees.

2. Spiritual Life. In addition to work on the State of Society report:

a. Upcoming Bible study is planned for Third Sunday in April, with an Easter topic to be prepared by Geoff Knowlton. He encourages the older Young Friends to attend.

b. The committee discussed drafting a safety policy for the Meeting, and will start by collecting examples from other Meetings. We also discussed eldering in worship and how these skills would be used.

3. PSCO

a. The first of the film series, "Breaking Out of the Box", was a success. As part of the event, letters were sent to elected officials in opposition to solitary confinement practices.

b. There were two successful speaking events held at the Meeting this month. Jeff Halper spoke on the human rights situation in Israel-Palestine, and Steven Collins spoke the words of peace and justice workers. We appreciate the positive publicity and community interest generated by Jeff Halper's speaking event.

c. Upcoming event: "Still We Rise", testimonies of previously incarcerated people, will be held on April 9, at the UU Church on Holden Street, cosponsored by the Meeting. Meeting members are encouraged to attend.

d. Quaker Network to End Mass Incarceration, a web resource, is up and running and all are encouraged to view this.

e. Requests for Support: Pastor Ida, who seeks support for a Kenyan orphanage, may visit the Meeting in later April, and this will be considered at the next PSCO meeting. Also a request for support from Cuban Friends will be considered.

f. The committee sent a letter of support to the Worcester Islamic Society regarding their efforts to establish a muslim cemetery in Dudley MA. The Meeting would like to send a letter of broader support from the Meeting as a whole.

Announcements:

1. Next First Day is Quarterly Meeting, to be held at Smithfield Friends Meeting. Worship is at 10:30, followed by potluck and then a program by Betsy Casden on the FWCC World Plenary held in January in Peru. The business agenda includes a vacancy in the position of Recording Clerk for the Quarter, support for Cuban Friends, and discussion of the possible name change of the RI-Smithfield Quarter. Those interested in attending may coordinate carpooling.

2. Woolman Hill has sent a letter of request for financial assistance from individuals or Meetings.

The meeting closed with silence.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Barnard

Scheduled Meetings

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business	Second Sunday, 9 AM
Spiritual Life Committee, convener Matthew Shorten	Fourth Sunday 9:30 AM
Practical Committee, convener Aaron Sakulich	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Peace/Social Concerns/Outreach, convener Phil Stone.....	Fourth Saturday, 9:30 AM
Mid-week Meeting for Worship, convener Aaron Sakulich.....	Wednesdays, 7 PM
Clerk of Worcester Friends Monthly Meeting	Daron Barnard
Recording Clerk	Katharine Barnard
Treasurer.....	Mark Sullivan
Recording Clerk/Corresponding Secretary	Clarence Burley
First Day School	Katie Green and Katherine Barnard
Newsletter Editor.....	Shiela Brenner and Katie Green

Deadline for the next newsletter is flexible.

Voluntary Set-up

Worcester Friends Meeting: The Meeting for Eating

Each First Day, Worcester Friends share a pot luck lunch at the rise of Meeting for Worship. The offering vary from week to week, but there is always enough to go around. Watch the newsletter for occasional recipes that are printed when Mmmm's and Oooo's and Ahhh's are uttered.