

Worcester Friends Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)

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June - July 2013

QUERIES

Do our vocations provide constructive and beneficial service? Do we observe integrity in our business transactions? Do we avoid involving ourselves beyond our ability to manage? Are we careful to conduct our affairs punctually, justly, and honorably? Do we avoid participation in lotteries, betting, and gambling? Have we confronted our own decisions about our use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and do we encourage others to do likewise? Have we considered the cost in human suffering that might result from such use?

- FAITH AND PRACTICE, *New York Yearly Meeting*

Members Musings

by Virginia Powell

About a month ago I was asked to give a tour at the Worcester Art Museum to a small group of second graders from one of the city's elementary schools. One of my selections was the Museum's version of Edward Hicks's "Peaceable Kingdom." The little ones had no trouble recognizing the Native Americans and the Quakers (Thank you Quaker Oats!) in the vignette on the left side of the canvas, but the narrative on the right side gave them some trouble. One of the boys raised his hand and wanted to know what was happening with the "three kids and the bunch of animals" on the right. I asked him to come up to the picture and find and identify a wild animal. "Wild animals stand to



my left," I said. I then asked another student to come up to the picture and find a farm animal. "Farm animals to my right." When all the animals had been sorted and grouped, I asked the wild animals what they wanted to do with the farm animals. Amidst growls and howls, they shouted that they wanted to eat them. "Okay," I said. "But that's not what Quakers would do." I then asked all of the wild animals to pick a farm animal partner and to shake hands. "This is what Quakers would do," I said. "They'd make friends with their enemies. They wouldn't eat them. And that's exactly why Quakers call themselves Friends."

Spiritual Growth Through Conflict

The Fifth Month's Third Sunday Discussion was facilitated by Christel Jorgenson (Cambridge Meeting). The topic was Quakers, conflict and communication. Even though non-violence is a strongly held Testimony in the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers often avoid addressing interpersonal conflicts. Our Meeting is in period of change - which often includes conflict, as addressed in Geoff Knowlton's Members' Musings (February - March WFM Newsletter).

When our Meeting decided at the beginning of this year to adapt a different structure, it was predicted that there could be stress. Change is not easy, and we decided to alter our committee structure. It was also decided that the committee previously called Nominating Committee would be renamed to Gifts and Leadings.

It has been understood that the Nominating Committee of a Quaker Meeting has an important job, as do we all, of helping Friends identify and develop their Gifts - those skills and talents with which they may best serve God and the Meeting - and explore their Leadings - the actions they take in their ministry. Mistakes and misunderstandings were made by Worcester Friends, and some of us hurt others. We ask for guidance and forgiveness, and recognize that our human nature and

interactions will sometimes result in hurtful actions.

Our Third Sunday discussion with Chris provided opportunity for Friends to explore healthy ways to interact with each other. We were reminded that our perceptions and our memory may be changed by our emotions, and it is essential to understand the facts before we act. We reflected on why we come to Meeting, and asked ourselves what is God teaching us?

We strive for a better understanding of the way the Spirit works in our Quaker community; we aim to have better communication between ourselves, to clearly define responsibilities, and to support each other. It is essential that we trust that of God in each other and be able to share our vulnerabilities as well as our strengths. It is our hope that our Meeting will grow Spiritually as we have the courage and the faith to confront and learn from conflicts as they arise in our community.

The Worcester Friends present at Third Sunday Discussion appreciate Chris's wisdom and guidance and the prayerful queries she offered. Surely, the entire Worcester Friends Community will benefit.

Personal Retreats At Woolman Hill

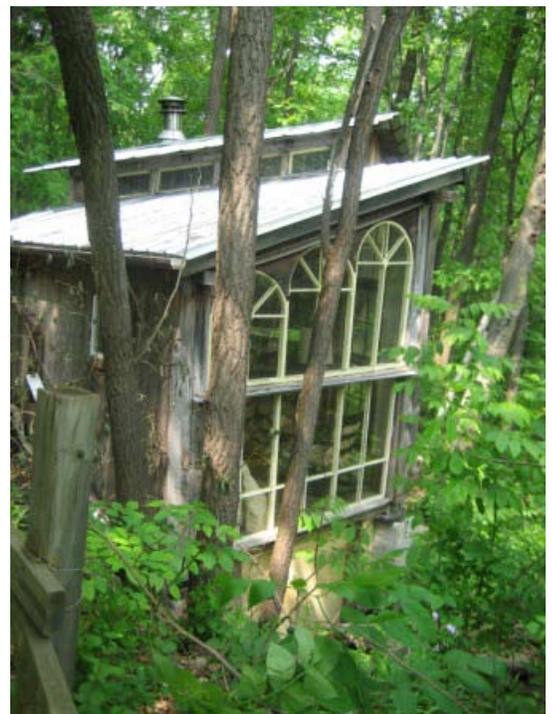
Do you crave peace and quiet? A break? More Sabbath time?

Do you need space to focus? Time to work on a project? Need some time to be still? To watch fireflies in the fields and wake to birdsong? Breathe deep?

Whether it's for an overnight or for several months, Woolman Hill can offer you the stillness and natural beauty that allows you to sink deep into whatever is calling to you: rest, contemplation, uninterrupted time...

Woolman Hill has several cabins that are available for retreats. Tucked into the edges of the woods, the cabins each provide electricity, a woodstove, an outhouse, and simple kitchen supplies.

For more information about personal retreats at Woolman Hill, visit <http://woolmanhill.org>



The Worcester Friends Meeting consists of Friends who take their beliefs and values into the world in many various ways. The way we interact with each other and our environment is not separate from the way we perceive and experience the Divine.

Stewardship is an integral value as we care for each other, the environment, and ourselves. As a Friends Meeting, we come together to care for 901 Pleasant Street. Our meetinghouse demands our time, our care and our dollars. During our monthly Business Meetings, referred to as Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, our Clerk gently reminds Friends to maintain a prayerful attitude as we address issues of Stewardship of the building and interactions with each other and the broader Quaker community.

Being a Quaker is not synonymous with the building where we meet to worship, and yet the importance of Community is manifested in the way we maintain the building.

There are more times than I'd care to admit when I wish the stewardship of our meetinghouse fell upon the shoulders of paid staff. And then I realize that being a Quaker is, to me, synonymous with living a caring life. It is rather like a metaphor for being a person.

We are also responsible for the stewardship of our lives and our homes. The laundry must be washed and folded; the lawn mowed. It is necessary to care for our bodies. Somewhere in my youth, I was told that my body is a "holy temple for God." I must care for my physical being as well as my spiritual being. So I renew my vows to take good care of my body by exercising and eating healthy. This is not easy for me. I can easily spend days reading, dreaming and writing. I love pizza and ice cream. But I do my best to be a good f/Friend.

I hear some Friends speak of their Daily Spiritual Practice. I ask myself: What is MY daily spiritual practice?

Should I be more intentional about this? I remember a small book of daily devotionals called *The Upper Room* in my parents' home; each day held a Biblical quote and some text. We never shared it as a family, but it was always available, on the coffee table.

I personally do not have a daily practice. I enjoy frequent meditation or reading. I think of a line from one of Anne Sexton's poems: Life is made up of morning coffee. It's an accomplishment for me when I go through a complete day being aware of the miracle of life and of the joy that my friends and family bring to me. It's my intention to not separate my moment-to-moment life from a regular spiritual practice, or daily devotional.

"Spiritual boosts" come to me through both planned and unplanned events: language, reading, hearing a story, or studying sacred text can inspire me just as much as a smile from my husband, the unexpected sighting of a black bear, or listening to the wind in the forest. A friend of Althea's once told me as we washed the floor at my home, "I love to work." Yes. When I can clean house, or cook, or tend the garden, without feeling oppressed, it is a "spiritual boost." This is what I think of as a spiritual practice.

Let us be aware that our life is defined by the choices we make. We can choose how we care for our friends, family and our home, ourselves. Or we can be distracted from our spiritual Being when conflicts become an interference rather than an invitation to learn more. This is not to say that pain and suffering can be invitations. A Buddhist friend told me that suffering is part of life, and "Christians spend a lot of time trying hard to avoid it."

I was thinking about spiritual practices and Life. I want my Life to be a Spiritual Practice. I say practice because I know I won't get it right all the time. I will need to practice.

Mid-week Worship Group

by Aaron Sakulich

For the past two months, a mid-week meeting for worship has been offered at the meetinghouse. This was started in response to the concern that there are several friends who cannot usually make the regular weekly meeting. Attendance has averaged six people, including a visitor from a programmed meeting in Rhode Island, and several friends that work on the weekends. The meeting is held in the library from 7 to 8 PM on Wednesday nights, and is usually followed by tea, snacks, and conversation. All are welcome, and it is hope that as the mid-week meeting progresses, attendance will rise.



The current issue of the Journal (of Friends Historical Association) called *Quaker History* delighted me with two feature articles and a book review.

Quakers and Slavery in 18th-century North Carolina answers the question of how the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (NCYM) became the largest owner of slaves in that pre-Civil War state.

The time line of manumission in the NCYM starts with 1768's condemnation of slave trading for profit. By 1814 virtually no slaves were in the personal ownership of North Carolina Quakers. This progress occurred in a colony, later state, that supported slavery by a law requiring county sheriffs to seize emancipated slaves and sell them back into slavery with one fifth of the proceeds going to any freeholder who apprehended the freed slave and the remainder going to the state treasury. This presented a quandary as the slaves were very likely to be returned to a much crueler condition. While some Quakers took the position that by freeing their slaves they had rid themselves of the sin of slave owning and any mistreatment afterwards was none of their affair, others were deeply concerned about the later condition of those they freed. The problem was solved by a North Carolina law authorizing religious societies to name trustees who could accept gifts of property on their behalf. The NCYM trustees received the wages of their 350 slaves, spent the funds for their care, but otherwise treated them as free.

The Nixon Presidency and American Quakerism highlights the tension between the different strands of Quakerism exemplified by Nixon's East Whittier Friends Church (and its memberships in Friends United

Meeting and Evangelical Friends Alliance) and the more liberal Friends General Conference. Nixon was strongly supported by weighty Friend Elton Trueblood and more famously by Billy Graham, both of whom later became disillusioned with their protégé. (Full disclosure: Trueblood's books occupy nearly half a shelf of our library.) The FUM types were supporting or excusing Nixon's extension of the war in Viet Nam long after the liberals were calling for his disownment and impeachment. FUM enthusiasm for him only waned after the White House tapes revealed his profanity.

A review of *Treason on Trial in Revolutionary Pennsylvania* reinforces my own reading of the story of John Roberts, a prosperous Quaker miller who was convicted and hanged for giving aid and comfort to the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777 and 1778. Harassed by neighbors for his aloofness from the revolution, Roberts left his country home and family to live in the city where he had some contact with the British officers. He tried to get General Howe to rescue some Quakers who had been banished for failure to support the revolution, and he accompanied, perhaps by force, a foraging expedition led by General Cornwallis into his old neighborhood.

The author, David Maxey, recreates from the notes of the judge and a Quaker observer the trial that took place after the British abandoned Philadelphia. The testimony of many witnesses is summarized by Judge McKean, but the guilty verdict is never in doubt. The Quaker observer for the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings is mainly interested in showing that Roberts in many ways did not live up to his Quaker calling. The ramifications of the conviction to the Roberts family are very well described. It is not an easy read, involved as it is with 18th century jurisprudence, but there is a copy of the book in the library and a copy of the journal on the hall shelf.

New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) Annual Sessions 2013 will be at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, from Saturday, August 3 to Thursday, August 8, 2013. This year's theme:

***Live Up to the Light Thou Hast
and More Will Be Granted Thee***

The words for this year's Sessions come from the journal of a young adult Friend, Caroline Fox, who lived in the 19th century.



At the age of 21, Caroline Fox wrote of *"the struggle through which a spark of true faith was lighted in my [her] soul...The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at meet-*

ing, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit: 'Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.'"

Attending part or all of the New England Yearly Meeting's Annual Meeting, or "Sessions", is a yearly tradition for many Friends throughout New England and even beyond. Our Meeting is well represented, and Worcester Friends enjoy this time in early August as a Spiritual shot-in-the-arm.

It is a special joy for me, as a storyteller, to see Bill Harley as one of the two Community Plenary speakers. Bill has long been a guiding light in storytelling; he is one of the country's most celebrated storytellers. Sunday afternoon Bill Harley (Providence Meeting), will talk about the power of discovering and sharing our personal stories.

On Monday afternoon, the second plenary speaker will be Shan Cretin, general secretary of the American Friends Service Committee:

<https://afsc.org/office/providence-ri>. She will speak on

corporate response and our call to faithfulness.

Michael Birkel, author and professor of religion at Earlham College will present Bible Half Hour, at 8:30 AM Monday through Thursday. Michael is a member of Clear Creek Monthly Meeting of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. No stranger to New England, Michael has, in the past, been a member of Vassalboro (Maine) Friends Meeting and a sojourning member of Friends Meeting at Cambridge (Mass).

Tuesday evening's all-ages concert will feature Susan Stark, a gifted Quaker singer and songwriter. She has performed at numerous Quaker gatherings, including several yearly meetings, the Friends General Conference Gathering and the FWCC Triennials in Kenya and the Netherlands. Susan is a member of Crossville Friends Meeting, Southern Appalachian YM & Association. She was a member of Hanover (NH) Friends Meeting 1986-96 and served as Junior Yearly Meeting staff.

I especially enjoy Bible half hour, and participating in an anchor group. The entire schedule is available on line at the new and improved NEYM website:

<http://sessions.neym.org> (Thank you, Jeff Hipp.) It is always enlightening and interesting to be present for a large Quaker meeting for worship with attention to business (those knitting needles silently click away). Worship with so many Friends can be totally awesome! I hope you will join us at Sessions this August.

Early registration is available until June 30. Participate for the full five days or come for whatever time you can. Register on-line, or call the New England Yearly Meeting office.

I get lots of advice on the subject of oral ministry. Several Quaker publications have presented me with flow charts that propose to guide me in discerning whether the thought that came during the silence is sourced in the Spirit. If it is not I am advised to "return to the center." The charts prompt me to consider whether God has sent me this thought for my own personal growth in the Spirit, or whether she intends that others might benefit from it. If it is for me alone, I am advised to "return to the center" These charts are so detailed that I can never remember all the steps in the analysis. They are useless.

In the event that the leading to speak passes these tests, weighty Friends advise me to stand and speak clearly. They ask me to consider that if God wants me to speak, she even more wants the Friends who might profit from this ministry to hear the message.

But there is one piece of advice that I have never received from a Quaker source. It comes from William Strunk who advises me to, "Omit needless words."

Please God give me a spiritual blue pencil and the grace to pause and consider the best way to express your thought so that I might "make every word tell."

This 'n That

June's Market Day was a great success. Many thanks to all the Friends who helped set up and worked throughout the hot, sunny day. Thanks to Jill Tetreau for taking the lead in bringing in new vendors and soliciting items from local merchants for sale. The new hot dog machine boosted sales and could barely keep up with the demand. Our Market Days, twice a year, are fun to attend and help us to raise money.

Betty and Brian Poynton will return to our Meeting in July. They plan to attend NEYM Session. We eagerly await their presence at Meeting before they return to their new home in North Carolina.

Betty Jones made her annual visit to the Linekin Bay Resort near Boothbay Harbor, Maine. Phil Stone and Katie Green spent a few days with her at this lovely place.

Friends will notice that the wood floors on the first floor have been refinished. They now gleam and shine with glory, thanks to Mary Chenaille who spearheaded this project.

Our well stocked library is reorganized and much more user-friendly. Clarence Burley and his helpers have done a fantastic job.

White socks, small toiletry items, and Stoneyfield Yogurt containers are collected at the meetinghouse. Please bring what you can. There is a note from Annette Rafferty pinned to the Peace/Social Concerns bulletin board thanking us for the yogurt containers which Sandy Kocher collects. Abbey's House residence enjoy the coupons these empty containers generate.

Four of our young Friends went to Friends Camp in China Maine. They were there over the Fourth of July, and had a wonderful time in spite of some rainy days.

First Day School will not meet during the summer. We will begin First Day School with the school calendar, the Sunday after Labor Day. Childcare for preschoolers is available with advance notice.

Lemon Balm

Growing herbs

I travel the world.

They all
originated
somewhere -

Europe

Asia

Africa

South America...

I'm brought up

to the present

when harvesting

Melissa officinalis

Lemon balm

soother of body

and mind

I read

this balm

is native to the Mediterranean

to Russia

Syria

Iran

Turkestan

Sounds like

geography

of the morning news.

I'm glad plants

are a-political.



- Sandra Kocher

Quakers and Prison Ministry

The United States has the highest prison rate in the world. While it is true that crime rate is decreasing, the rate of incarceration is on the rise. The U.S. has 5% of the world's population and 25% of the world's incarcerated population. Sixty percent of the incarcerated people in the U.S. are "minorities," and over 30% are black men and youth.

Michelle Alexander writes of institutional racism and poverty in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Colorblindness*, which was introduced to Friends by Dr. Michelle Corbin when she spoke at a Quarterly Meeting last year,

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a proliferation of punitive crime control legislation led the U.S. to have the highest rate of female incarceration in the entire world. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics between 1986 and 1991, the total state prison population grew by 58%. The number of men increased by 53%, while the number of women increased by 75%.

The Center for Church and Prison reports that in Massachusetts the number of incarcerated women increased an alarming 646% between 1980 and 2010. While black women account for 13 percent of the U.S. female population, they are fifty percent of the female prison population. Black women are 7 times more likely than white women to be incarcerated; and in 15 states African American women are incarcerated at rates 10 to 35 times greater than white women.

Quakers have a long history of prison ministry. Today prisons have become an industrial complex. Angela Davis attributes this to the rise of globalism in the 1980's and the growth of global capitalism, a system that puts profit before people. She points out that incarceration hides the problems of poverty at the same time that it generates income. The fastest growing area of prison growth is now immigrant detentions.

Prison reform is an important racial and economic justice issue. In the U.S., there are 7.5 million people in cor-

rectional control. This creates a caste system, in which CORI makes it difficult or impossible for people to find jobs or housing.

The working group of The Campaign to End the New Jim Crow (named after Michelle Alexander's book)

includes a Quaker presence. The working group, as listed on their website is: All Things Harlem, American Friends Service Committee (Northeast Region), Attica is All of Us, Campaign to End the Death Penalty, Center for Law and Justice, New York State Prisoner Justice Network, Religious Society of Friends Morningside Meeting, Riverside Church Prison Ministry, Think Outside the Cell Foundation.

The Center for Church and Prison, Inc. is a resource center working towards community revitalization through prison reform. Rev. George M. Walters-Sleyon is the founder of this organization. The website" <http://www.churchandprison.org> has many informative and educational links, including links to talks on YouTube.

Paul Gallagher has led Worcester Friends' involvement in providing a monthly dinner at Dismas House for many years. This mission of Dismas House is to reconcile former prisoners to society, and society to former prisoners through the development of a supportive community. Contact Paul to get involved.

Katie Green is an Alternatives to Violence Program facilitator. AVP started in the prisons in 1975. It is an international volunteer program that offers conflict resolution workshops to transform lives. Outside participants are invited to take part in Basic AVP training. Contact Katie for more information.



Worcester Friends Meeting

Meeting for Business

June 9, 2013

Present: Clarence Burley, Betty Jones, Mark Sullivan, Matthew Shorten, Jessica Seem, Katie Green, Daran Barnard, Kevin Walsh, Fred Mikkelsen, Paul Gallagher, Whitney Mikkelsen, Barbara Sullivan, Karen Sargent, clerk.

06-09-2013-1 Meeting began with a period of silence and the reading of the poem, To Be of Use, by Marge Piercy.

06-09-2013-2 Ministry & Counsel reports Midweek worship is off to a good start; worship groups at Overlook and Briarwood continue. Duplicate books from the library were offered to the Uxbridge worship group and to Friends who were interested.

06-09-2013-3 The State of Society Report has been forwarded as approved to both Quarterly and NE Yearly Meetings.

06-09-2013-4 M&C feels all meeting officers would benefit from a support group of 3, members and non-members. This has been helpful in other meetings.

06-09-2013-5 The treasurer reported the spring Market Day earned \$981 so far. Income is exceeding that budgeted. Automatic deductions are in place through Vanco.

06-09-2013-6 There was an unexpected expense of \$831.

06-09-2013-7 The treasurer notes that trustees would like to better track 'in kind donations' of goods and services. Friends are asked to e-mail the treasurer specifying the donation and its worth to: info@worcesterfriends.org.

06-09-2013-8 Trustees support the officers of the meeting each having an oversight group of 2-3 members/attenders.

06-09-2013-9 Buildings & Grounds estimates repairs of not more than \$1000 to the meeting house by the end of the year, which is well w/in the budget.

06-09-2013-10 Trustees recommend that committees be allowed to spend their entire allotted budget without going to business meeting, unless the expense is over \$500 or to a non-Quaker organization.

06-09-2013-11 The trustees bring a proposed treasurer's job description for the meeting. After some discussion, this was approved. It is suggested job descriptions be developed for all officers. Officers should meet with their support group to develop the job description, which should then go to the relevant committee before coming to business meeting.

06-09-2013-12 It was noted that the checks still list the name of the meeting as "Worcester Pleasant Street Friends Meeting". The bank won't change the name; there appears to be a process but this is not entirely clear. Trustees are asked to look in to this.

06-09-2013-13 David Legg will be asked to present details of costs to more efficiently heat the meeting room.

06-09-2013-14 Religious Ed. Classes have stopped for the summer. We have a new childcare provider, Maye, who is replacing Annilee who is going to college. They propose that the

Meeting give Annilee a graduation gift of \$100. Meeting approves this to come from the committee's budget.

06-09-2013-15 Gifts & Leadings believes that the support groups for officers should be chosen by the officer with input from Gifts & Leadings. These support groups would be under the oversight of Ministry & Counsel. The officer & support group would then develop a job description for that position. That would go to the Spiritual committee before going to business meeting. This could be reviewed annually.

06-09-2013-16 The committee transition will change to Spirituality, Practicality, Outreach committees; core group members are proposed. Practicality committee will include the treasurer ex-officio. The Spirituality committee will include the clerk ex-officio. Outreach committee will not include any ex-officio member. The new core groups were presented and asked to meet before the end of summer. The meeting approves the proposed committee core group members. These new committees are in effect at the end of business meeting today; old committees are dissolved. Those officers approved at the January annual meeting will continue for the current year.

06-09-2013-17 Opportunity having been given for questions and concerns, Meeting ended with a period of silence, purposing to meet again seventh month, fourteenth or at the call of the clerk.

Submitted in the Light,

Barbara Sullivan, recording clerk

Back Page

Clerk: Karen Sargent

Recording Clerk: Barbara Sullivan

Treasurer: Mark Sullivan

Corresponding Clerk: Clarence Burley

Newsletter Editor: Katie Green

Unprogrammed Meeting for Worship every First Day at 11 AM

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, Second Sunday at 9 AM

Meeting for worship: Wednesday, May 8, 7 PM at the Worcester Meetinghouse

Briarwood: 3rd Friday, 3:30 PM

Overlook: 1st Wednesday

Please send contributions for the August-September Newsletter to info@worcesterfriendsmeeting.org with Newsletter in the subject line by September 15th.