

Worcester Friends Newsletter July/August 2017



Calendar

Sunday Meeting for Worship: 11 A.M.

Childrens' Program: 11 A.M. (childcare year-round, First Day School program during school year)

Potluck Lunch: 12.15 P.M. every Sunday. Stay for fellowship.

Business Meeting: 2nd Sunday each month at 9 A.M.

The Meetinghouse is Handicapped Accessible

**Market Day is Saturday
September 16th, 9 am-3 pm
(Rain Date is September 23rd)**



Come see us for Fall Goodies!

Upcoming Special Events

Sunday, 9/10, 9:00 am. Meeting for Business. All are welcome.

Sunday, 9/10, 4:00 pm. Belmont AME Zion Church, 55 Illinois St. *Songs of Hope*, Concert Sponsored by Worcester Black-Jewish Alliance, Jewish Federation of Central Mass., NAACP and Worcester Black Clergy Alliance, followed by pot luck dinner, kugels and collards.

Friday, 9/15, 4:00 pm. Pie baking for Market Day.

Friday, 9/15, 5:30 pm. First Unitarian Church, 90 Main St. Panel Discussion: *Peacemaking in Perilous Times*, Congressman James McGovern, Former Mayor Joe O'Brien, Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, Center for Nonviolent Solutions, Refreshments, Open to the public.

Saturday, 9/16, 9:00 am.-3:00 pm. Market Day.

Sunday, 9/17, 9:30 am. Threshing Session on White Supremacy. Yearly Meeting asks us to report on our response to the minute which can be found at <https://neym.org/news/2016-yearly-meeting-minute-white-supremacy>

Sunday, 9/24, 2:00-4:00 pm, Boston Common near Park St. MBTA station, International Day of Peace/Boston.

Saturday, 10/7, 10:00 am.-4:00 pm. Agape Community Hardwick, Lakota Chief Looking Horse keynoting *Listening to Native Voices*, Contact David Legg, dleggenery@gmail.com for more info.

Tuesday, 10/7, 5:30 pm. City Hall Plaza, Day of Prayer for the City of Worcester, Sponsored by NAACP and Worcester Black Clergy Alliance.

Thoughts on Charlottesville and its Aftermath: Where are Friends Now?

The recent events in Charlottesville and other places reminded me of a day long ago when the civil right's movement was just beginning to simmer. It was a hot one and my mother dropped off my two youngest sisters at the only community pool in our town. She let them out with changes of clothes and a handful of quarters for admission and a snack. Like many parents in those days, she drove off feeling like her kids were going to have a good afternoon with friends while cooling off.

But when she got back home, the phone was ringing. It was my youngest sister, Mary Margaret, who had used one of her quarters to call from a near by pay phone. She was crying and said the manager wasn't going to let she and Lisa into the pool because they were "negro." My sisters had been adopted by my folks and were actually Lakota Sioux but they got very dark every summer. Both were in tears, scared and humiliated. My mother, of course, drove right back and picked the girls up.

Two things happened that day. First, the manager of the pool learned that it is very unwise to cross an Italian mother's children. I suspect I don't need to say more about that. Secondly, the civil rights movement became personal for the Knowltons. I suppose it always had been. Both my grandfathers fought in WWII and I heard their stories and saw their clarity about standing up to the evil that was the Nazis. Going to war was a different response than my Quaker father would have, but their determination stuck with me. It was personal for them. As time went on I helped organize a boycott of the pool. My family became active in community organizing in our town, reaching out to the African American community.

Sometime later, my father contracted with James Farmer to come and speak at the local university. Some say Mr. Farmer was a precursor to Dr. King. I didn't know then, but I do remember his visit. He came to our home for dinner before he spoke and we told him about the swimming pool incident. I remember that he took my sisters into his arms and with moistened eyes said something like, "Don't you believe them. You are special and your folks love you. Don't you believe them for a minute."

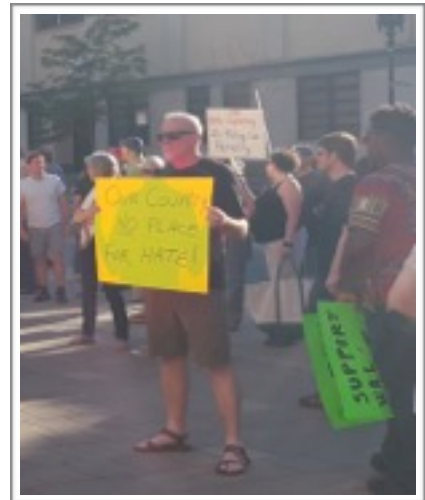
I went to his speech, but I have to admit I don't remember a bit of it. But I will never forget that dinner.

The events of Charlottesville are so discouraging. I grieve for the family of Heather Heyer. I grieve for our country and I'm frustrated that "here we go again." For many this is a huge issue and it is for me. But it is also and will always be about two little girls who just wanted to go swimming on a hot summer's day.

—**Geoff Knowlton**

It is absolutely necessary for White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants like me to believe in and foster a culture of white supremacy in America. If we did not believe so strongly about white privilege, we would be overcome by shame by the way our ancestors nearly exterminated the indigenous population and cruelly exploited the laboring class of fellow humans that they purchased as stolen property.

—**Clarence Burley**



Tom Brenner at Worcester Rally against Racism, August, 2017

NEYM - Such a Time as This: A Response to Hate and Violence

White supremacy, white nationalism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are contrary to God's vision for our world. White supremacy is a form of idolatry, and a sin against the God of Love and Justice. In this moment — as in every moment — the Spirit calls us to another way.

We are four white Quakers serving in positions of leadership in our faith community. Our spiritual communities across the six New England states include people of many races, ethnicities, sexual and gender identities, national origins and backgrounds. We who write to you are called to speak to those in our faith community and beyond who share with us the privilege that being perceived as “white” in this society affords. This is a message from us as white Quakers to white Quakers, white people of faith, and white people who live in the United States of America in 2017.

In this historical moment, as in so many before, the voices, bodies and spirits of people of color are rising in witness, struggle and liberation whether we as white people join them or not. The essential question is whether — at such a time as this — we who benefit because of our “whiteness” will accept in a new way the Spirit's call to act for justice and wholeness, asking for God's guidance with every step.

Our Quaker spiritual ancestors testify to the experience of how we can be painfully “convicted” when we see the true nature of our lives illuminated in the Light of God. This is one such moment of conviction for us, and we are compelled to share it.

At such a time as this, alongside many throughout our world, we condemn the acts of hateful, racist, anti-Semitic violence and terrorism in Charlottesville and elsewhere in recent days as contrary to the will of God, the witness of Jesus, and all that is holy. God is Love, and we witness that this Love is stronger than hate, fear and death. We speak this truth to that of God in each one of the white nationalists and pray that their hearts will be changed, trusting that even now there can be transformation.

Yet even as we are appalled by the horrific events in Charlottesville, we must not allow ourselves to forget the centuries-old foundation and present economic and

political reality of white supremacy. Even as the torches tore through the night in Charlottesville, and as our prayers and voices joined the call for healing and justice, we bore the marks of privilege. We bear them today. Each of us who this society sees as white stands on a corrupt foundation. Our worldly power, material wealth and inherited perception of ourselves as being normative and central to history are rooted in this painful truth. This is not just about white supremacists “over there”—it is about the ways in which we too have been formed and benefited from the myriad ways whiteness oppresses whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not.

None of us who benefit from a “white” identity have clean hands or pure hearts. The recent events in Charlottesville and elsewhere offer a monstrous mirror for us.

May we find the courage not to turn our eyes away from this mirror, comforted that we aren't like “those” white people. There are no easy answers or quick fixes, but we are promised that by allowing our lives to be illuminated, convicted, and held up by Truth, a way can be made where it seems there is no way. In this searching and struggle, the souls we save may well be our own.

This is indeed a time for grieving, a time for prayer, and a time for turning again toward Love. This is a time for **showing up** with humility, courage and steadfastness—seeking relationship with those engaged in this work for the long haul. This is a time for being willing to make use of the privilege we have inherited in small and large ways, to risk some greater pain, discomfort and loss with an eye toward transforming the systems of domination that cause the ongoing suffering of so many. This is a time to affirm and live the Truth that God's Love is stronger and more powerful than all the forces of hatred, division, isolation, numbness and fear that hold this country hostage. This is a time to act precisely because we don't **have** to—because comfort is the payment we receive in exchange for our spiritual lives in the devil's bargain that is white supremacy.

Tearing down these structures and systems of domination — the spiritual powers of white supremacy in our hearts, in our faith communities and in our society — is not something white people must do out of a sense of altruism, **for** those who suffer most.

In this historical moment, once again God offers us the possibility that even in the face of centuries of injustice, there could yet be redemption for white people. Casting out the seeds of white supremacy so deeply rooted in our society and in our hearts is work we must take up each day.

The in-breaking of the reign of God reveals a vision of equity, justice, and joy: white supremacy has no place in God's plans.

The work of dismantling white supremacy is our responsibility. It's time to live as if the Truth is true.

Frederick Weiss, *Presiding Clerk*

Noah Merrill, *Yearly Meeting Secretary*

Sarah Gant, *Clerk of the Permanent Board*

Honor Woodrow, *Clerk of Ministry and Counsel*



Katie Green, Phil Stone (above) and **Mary Chenaille** (below) at the Boston Counter Protest, August 2017.



WFM members reading Frederick Douglass' 1852 speech "What to a Slave is the 4th of July" at City Hall, July, 2017.



The Worcester chapter of SURJ (Showing Up For Social Justice) meets monthly at the Worcester YWCA. Sign up for announcements of meetings and actions at <https://www.facebook.com/SURJWorcester/>

Like many Americans, I was flabbergasted by the election of an ignorant, sexist reality show star to the presidency of the United States. Like many, I was stunned into a depression which was compounded by daily news ingestion. Each administration announcement caused me to retreat and escape to an emotional fetal position. The public display of hatred in Charlottesville finally jarred me out of this complacency. As Friends, we cannot afford not to act.

When NeoNazis march carrying weapons through the streets of our cities, it is time to act. When the president of the United States refuses to condemn these Nazis, it is time to act. When we watch the rights and lives of immigrants being destroyed, when LGBTQ people are persecuted, when our lands are returned to environmental rapists, and the school to prison profit/control pipeline expands...we can no longer NOT act.

Like many like-minded people, I can take small daily steps to confront and dismantle the white supremacist foundation of this country. I can face and acknowledge the privilege which I enjoy rather than take it for granted. I can teach my children the true history of these United States which is based on genocide and slavery. I can acknowledge and support their experiences as black girls who have too few mirrors in their teachers, books, magazines, movies, toys and so many other public cultural objects and institutions. I can speak up when I witness micro or macro aggressions. I can put my money where my morals lay by supporting Black owned businesses and boycotting companies or politicians which promote any kind of hateful agenda. I can, like the authors of the NEYM Response printed above, show up when necessary to bear witness to those who ask for my support. I can, humbly but energetically, expand my consciousness of those who do not share my privilege by reading their writings and listening to them speak. I can then speak myself, ever trembling, Truth to Power as Friends have always sought to do.

—**Sheila Brenner**

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters...This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

—**Frederick Douglass**

Civil War Era Antiques at Worcester Friends Meetinghouse

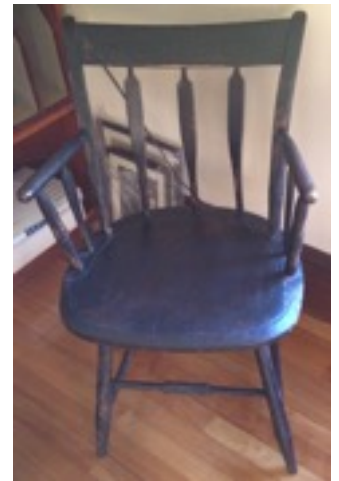


In 2013 our meeting received a gift from Bennington (VT) Friends Meeting. Arnold Ricks of Bennington delivered two nineteenth century chairs, a side chair and a delicately crafted rocker in the Windsor style. Both are painted black and show signs of being well used. Also included in the delivery was a curiously wrought wooden chest, about 18 inches wide and 13 inches front to back, the inside depth going from 18 inches to one foot because of the slanted top. It sits on casters, and the top and three sides are covered in dark sheet metal that is impressed with bas-relief scenes. The most prominent shows an outdoor tavern on the slanted top. The front of the chest has a mythological scene, Zeus in the background of female figures. The sides display a barber—or maybe a dentist—attending to a client and a domestic scene of a man playing a violin to a woman while they are seated at a table.

Arnold Ricks told us that these antiques belonged in Worcester because they were once the property of Worcester resident, Helen E. (Wheeler) Smith (1839-1930) who bequeathed them to her friends Ward and Hannah Raymond. They left the items to their daughter, Thoreau Raymond (1914-2011), who in turn donated them to Bennington Friends Meeting where she was a member.



The Worcester Historical Museum was kind enough to provide a copy of Helen Smith's July 1, 1930, obituary with her photograph and headlined, "Civil War Nurse's Death Ends Remarkable Career." The obituary cited an interview with Helen Smith telling of her enlistment as an army nurse in 1863 after she was rebuffed in 1861 for being too young. In 1862 she had married Woodbury C. Smith just prior to his enlistment in the army. The Historical Museum also provided Civil War personnel records of Woodbury Smith. They show that he was a private in Company H of the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. (Interestingly a messmate of Smith's was a Henry E. Southwick of Leicester.)



While Helen was serving at Fort Schuyler in The Bronx, New York, Woodbury was discharged from the 34th Massachusetts for promotion as an officer in the Thirty-fifth United States Colored Infantry. There is a history of this regiment at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ncusct/shana.htm>. The commanding officer was Col. James C. Beecher, a younger brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. It was engaged primarily in "fatigue duty" according to a complaint by the brigade commander to corps headquarters. However in 1864 the regiment fought at the battles of Olustee, Florida, and Honey Hill, South Carolina. Helen was transferred to Hilton Head, South Carolina, but "owing to strict military orders that prevailed she seldom saw him." There is a letter in the Wheeler-Smith archives from "Lieut. Gen. Dorothea Dix" ordering Helen "not to try to see her husband." Both Smiths were mustered out (Woodbury as a captain and military judge) in 1866 and returned to Worcester, where they lived until Woodbury's death in 1913. He is believed to be the maker of the curious box at Worcester Friends meetinghouse.

At the time of her death in 1930, Helen was living nearby at 38 Richmond Avenue, probably with the Raymonds. Ward Raymond was the executor of her estate. In 1942 his daughter, Thoreau Raymond, donated Helen's papers to Haverford College Library, Quaker and Special Collections. An inventory can be found by Googling "Wheeler-Smith Family Papers." Is there any historian who wants to study the life of the last surviving Civil War nurse in Massachusetts?



---Clarence Burley

Friends are invited to read **Geoff Knowlton**'s thoughtful piece on life and death in the August 2017 [Friends Journal](https://www.friendsjournal.org/beauty-beauty-everywhere/) which can be accessed at this link:

<https://www.friendsjournal.org/beauty-beauty-everywhere/>

SHELLING PEAS

Late June- the nearby vegetable farm is opening its sales starting with peas and strawberries!

Now I'm shelling peas - plunk, plunk into the pot. I take a small handful to taste. It's been so long since I've had fresh green peas in my mouth after months of frozen ones - good, too, but different.

While I'm shelling my mind goes back to when I was a child about 6 or 7 and living on the campus of a small college in North Carolina. We all, faculty families and students, ate in a common dining room overlooking a lake.

I recall some of us - adults and a few children - gathered outside the back door to the kitchen shelling peas. We opened the soft shells of the peas and let them fall into a common container. Just long enough for a child to sustain interest before heading off to join friends.

—**Sandra Kocher**



Friends, young and old, enjoyed a lovely evening at the home of **Mary Bennett** while celebrating with the **Mikkelsen** family before they embarked on a new life in Florida.



Worcester Friends Meeting
 Religious Society of Friends
 (Quakers)
 901 Pleasant Street
 Worcester, MA 01602



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,	-----	First Sunday, 9:30 AM
Peace/Social Concerns/Outreach, convener Karen Sargent	-----	Fourth Saturday, 9:30 AM
Clerk of Worcester Friends Meeting	-----	Daron Barnard
Recording Clerk	-----	Katharine Barnard
Corresponding Clerk	-----	Clarence Burley
First Day School	-----	Katie Green, Katharine Barnard
Newsletter	-----	Sheila Brenner

Please send general correspondence to info@worcesterfriendsmeeting.org. Items of note for the next Newsletter may also be sent to brennerfamily@gmail.com.