



Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Newsletter

A publication of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

The real security in human life is to be found in a reverence for it.

— John Bright, 1868

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SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING FOR BUSINESS 12/5/04

The following queries from New York Yearly Meeting are read:

How has the anguish of the world challenged your meeting or worship group?

Where do monthly meetings and worship groups see the Light breaking forth?

What different kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries are recognized and appreciated in your meeting or worship group?

Many Friends offer messages responsive to these queries, which will be considered in preparation of the State of the Society Report.

Friends welcome Diane Bonner into Brooklyn Meeting. She has transferred from 15th Street Monthly Meeting. A welcoming committee is formed consisting of Joe Garren, Maria Arias, Georgia Southcotte, Lucy Sikes and Mary Pagurelias.

We hear the first reading of a letter from April DiComo requesting membership in the meeting.

We approve Ivor Brown's release from service on the First Day School Committee and the Book Table Committee.

We approve Georgia Southcotte's release from service on the Discussions Committee. She has also been released from further service as Meeting Recorder, but has agreed to continue to serve until a replacement is found.

Tom Rothschild reads the Clerk's Report for 2004.

We hear the reports from welcoming committees for Jon Miller and R. Barbara Kuesell.

The Property Committee requests an additional \$250.00 for this year's budget, to purchase a new coffeemaker and a new step-stool. The clerk of ministry and counsel notes that that committee anticipates a probable surplus of at least that amount, which could be transferred to the property committee budget. Friends approve.

The Welcoming Committee asks for an additional \$150.00 for this year's budget to purchase literature. M & C also will provide this money.

The History Committee annual report is read and accepted.

The following nominations are approved:

Clerk of the Meeting: Tom Rothschild

History Committee: Lisa Samson

Social Hour Committee: Janet Filmeyr, Molly Rusnak, Diane Jensen

Nominating Committee: Aaron Cohen

The following are read:

Advice No. 12: *The attention of Friends is called to the propriety of conducting funerals and memorial meetings in a sincere spirit of worship. They are advised to avoid the display of floral decorations and the wearing of mourning and to adhere to our simple ceremony.*

Advice No. 8: *Friends are earnestly advised to refrain from practices that are detrimental to the body or the mind, for example, the use of intoxicants and tobacco, and the misuse of drugs.*

A passage from Faith and Practice of London Yearly Meeting:

It is our hope that in our meetings the will of God shall prevail rather than the desires of men, we do not set great store by rhetoric or clever argument. The mere gaining of debating points is found to be unhelpful and alien . . . Instead of rising hastily to reply to another, it is better to give them time for what has been said to make its own appeal, and to take its right place in the mind of the meeting.

We ought ever to be ready to give unhurried, weighty and truly sympathetic consideration to proposals brought forward from whatever part of the meeting, believing that what is said rises from the depths of the meeting . . . We should neither be hindered from making experiments by fear of undue caution, nor prompted to make novel suggestions to ill-considered courses.

SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING FOR BUSINESS 1/2/05

The second reading of the letter of April DiComo is postponed at her request. She gave birth to a son on 22d of 12th Month, making it difficult for her to attend at this time, and she wishes very much to be present at the consideration of her request for membership.

Friends hear a letter of Ivor Brown stating his reasons for ceasing to attend meeting for worship at this time. We are concerned and ask M & C to make a personal contact.

Friends welcome Lara Holliday into membership in Brooklyn Meeting. She has transferred from Langley Hills (VA) Monthly Meeting of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. A welcoming committee is formed consisting of Ted Ehrhardt, Michael Black, Nancy Black and Ben Frisch.

A request that this meeting take under its care the proposed marriage of Lara Holliday and James Forrester is being considered by the Committee on Ministry and Counsel.

We hear the report of the committee for oversight of the commitment ceremony of Helen Mullin and Mary Pagurelias. Friends accept the report with great joy.

The first draft of the annual report of the Recorder/Database Committee is read. Friends request that the report be presented with corrections at the February meeting for business.

The Nominating Committee proposes laying down the Witness and Outreach Committee and transferring its functions of witness to Friends' testimonies to the Committee on Peace and Social Action (with other outreach functions being divided among various committees); and also proposes laying down the position of Events Coordinator. Friends approve the proposals.

The Collections Committee reports orally that a total of \$ 61,646 has been collected as of this date towards a 2004 budget of \$ 62,000.00.

A preliminary budget for 2005 is presented. Friends discuss the document. The Finance Committee expects to propose a budget for 2005 at the February meeting for business.

The following nominations are approved:

Nominating Committee - Teresa Calabrese

Recorder - Lucy Sikes

Assistant Recorder - Iris Stoler

The following releases from committee service are approved:

Susan Laughter from service as named representative to Representative Meeting

Tara Greenway-Liebowitz from service on the Childcare Committee.

The following are read:

Advice No. 1: From the beginnings of our Society, we have considered it necessary to assemble frequently for the purpose of public worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance, thereby manifesting our belief in and dependence upon our creator. Meeting for worship is fundamental for us, and we should be diligent and punctual in our attendance. We seek, through communion with God, the strengthening influence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to discharge with fidelity the services we owe to God, to each other, and to all people.

Query No. 15: Do we partake of the joy of the love of God and make our lives a celebration of the sharing of this love? Do our daily lives so demonstrate Friends' testimonies as to commend them to others?

Epistle No. 206 of George Fox (1661):

In the power of God that is everlasting, and doth remain in this your day of trial, in it stand, of which ye are partakers, and in it is your peace and kingdom. And though ye have not a foot of ground to stand upon, yet ye have the power of God to skip and leap in; [if ye are] standing in that which is your life, that is everlasting. Who by the power of God are gathered up to the beginning, to the endless life, who have your Meetings in it, neither death, nor the power of it, can separate you from the power of God, for it was before death. In that are your living Meetings and joinings, and the building up of the spiritual households of living stones, gathered by and through the power of God.

Stand fast therefore in your confidence in the power of God and Light, which rules over powers, thrones, principalities and dominions. The power of God goes over them, and ye living in it, nothing can separate you from the love of God, which ye have in Christ the Seed, which was before the world began, glorified with the Father. And prisons, fetters, dungeons, and sufferings, what are they to you, who are married to the Lamb who was slain from the foundations of the world? Whom neither death, grave, nor all the powers of the

world were able to contain; but over all he rose (the Seed) and reigns. And ye that partake of the Power have power with God. In that we need not bid you; keep you Meetings. Be at peace with one another, and in love and tenderness, and in the wisdom of God, order and preserve and nourish all things to his glory.

SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING FOR BUSINESS 2/6/05

Friends welcome April DiComo into membership in Brooklyn Meeting. A welcoming committee is formed consisting of Patricia Glynn, Maria Arias, Lucy Sikes and possibly one or two others.

Friends approve, with sadness, the release of Mary Grimes from Membership in Brooklyn Meeting.

A letter is received from two members of the Brooklyn Friends School committee, which discusses the importance of strengthening the relationship between this meeting and the school, and requests that the meeting hold a workshop on this subject. The meeting requests that the discussions committee organize this workshop and include Staten Island executive meeting and Flushing monthly meeting.

We hear reports on the welcoming gathering for Lara Haldiday and also for Mara Komoska.

Friends accept the annual report of the Recorder, with the changes suggested at its reading at last month's meeting for business. It notes that there are 464 people listed in our database, 198 members and 218 attenders and a few miscellaneous others. The number of households is 270. Four children were born, and there was a ceremony of commitment for two women.

Joan Malin is released from the nominating committee and Sue O'Doherty is released from all committee work.

A draft of the 2004 State of the Society report is read and discussed. One part of the discussion concerns the tone and content of the opening paragraph, and the ways in which recent public events may have affected the centeredness of the meeting, as well as the centeredness of individuals in the meeting. Another focus is the language used in discussing the ceremony of commitment held during the year and whether it should be described as between two Lesbians, two women, or simply two members of the same gender. One Friend stands aside because he is not in unity with the inclusion in this minute of portions of the substance of the discussion, as inconsistent with traditional practice.

A revised draft will be presented at the March meeting for business.

Annual reports are heard and accepted from the collections committee and from the treasurer

Friends approve the proposed budget for the coming year.

Friends determine to reduce the size of the finance committee to two members, in addition to those serving ex officio.

The following nominations are approved:

Treasurer – Helen Mullin

Discussions committee – Willie May Watkins

The following are read:

Advice No. 16: *Friends' business meetings are meetings for worship with a concern for business. When there seems to be disagreement, a free expression of all opinions should be encouraged. Those who speak in meetings for business are advised not to be unduly persistent in advocacy or opposition, but, after having fully expressed their views, to recognize the generally expressed sense of the meeting. A deep and seeking silence can help to reconcile seemingly opposing points of view. Meetings should be conducted in the spirit of wisdom, forbearance, and love.*

Query No. 12: *Do we acknowledge the oneness of humanity and foster a loving spirit toward all people? Do we honor Friends' traditional testimony that men and women are equal? How do we work to make these ideals a reality? The challenge of maintaining balance "Care of the Meeting" . . . describes that covenant relationship in which we as individuals share in community our worship, our needs, our learnings and our leadings; the Meeting as opportunities for learning and sharing with one another, provides pastoral care, and supports witness; and individuals then enact and receive the support of the Meeting. It's an ongoing, reciprocal spiral, in which we are willing to give, receive, change and grow as a community and are willing as individuals to receive, give, grow and be changed in community.*

"We should make our commitments worshipfully, with due deliberation and good order, and with the understanding that they will require ongoing work from us. Sometimes we need to remind one another of our responsibility to uphold our commitments.... Are our personal attitudes (or "notions" in the language of early Quakers) about our abilities or resources keeping us from responding from the fullness of our being? Do we experience genuine barriers to responding fully? Do we need to evaluate the balance

between our commitments and the time need for our personal spiritual work? Do we need to discern whether our commitments are spirit-led, whether we are still being called to them, whether we might be called from active leadership to mentor, whether we are being called to something new?"

*Rochester Friends Meeting Under the Clerk's Hat
From the Farmington Scipio Regional Meeting
State of Society Report 2003.*

Thanks from the Community Dinner

The Community Dinner committee would like to thank the following Brooklyn businesses for their generous donations of delicious, healthy foods every month throughout the year. Collectively, they contribute over \$4,000 worth of produce and food annually.

Thank you from the Committee, the volunteers, the guests and the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

PERELANDRA NATURAL FOOD CENTER
175 Remsen Street

BAGEL WORLD
181 Court Street

UPRISING BAKERIES
210 Court Street, 138 7th Avenue, 328 7th Avenue

Workshop Announcement

*Establishing A Care Relationship Between Our
Local Quaker Schools and Our Meetings*

Sunday, March 20, 2005

1:00 p.m.

Brooklyn Meeting House

Suppose that the relationship between BFS and Brooklyn Monthly Meeting were not simply one of oversight (through NYQM) but also one of a care relationship between two Quaker communities. What would a care relationship look like? What would the responsibilities of the school be? What would the responsibilities of the Meeting be? Come help us brainstorm answers to these queries. Background information will also be provided about the current relationship of the school to the Quarter, but most of our effort will be focused on thinking creatively and brainstorming together.

Come Spend With Us to End the Committee Work Penalty

Freedom from isolation! Freedom from guilt! Help us to end the oppression of committee work. I stand behind the enemy lines on the Nominating Committee.

Aaron Cohen

Discussion Group Schedule

9:45 a.m. Discussion Group in the Meeting Room

On Meeting for Worship

March 13 - Joan Malin

March 20 - Nancy Black

Bible Study

March 27

Afternoon Discussion Group Meeting

Tying it All Together - Meditation and Journaling.

April 17th 1-3 PM

Please check the Discussion Group Bulletin Board for details.

From the NYQM Educational Fund Committee

Children of New York Quarterly Meeting member parents who are enrolled in Friends elementary or secondary schools may apply to the Educational Fund Committee for small grants of tuition aid.*

Applications should be submitted on the Educational Fund Committee's form. To receive a form, contact Jessica Fleischer-Black

Completed forms must be returned to the same address no later than March 15, 2005.

The Educational Fund Committee will meet later in March to consider requests for scholarship aid for the 2005-2006 school year. Notification of financial aid will be sent to the individual families; financial awards themselves will be sent directly to the students' institutions.

**Unfortunately, the funds available to the Committee for disbursement this year will be limited, so we anticipate being able to grant only small amounts.*

The Bridge Film Festival

This year Brooklyn Friends School will host The Bridge Film Festival on Saturday, April 16, 2005.

To find out more about the Festival and see clips of last years winners go to Brooklyn Friends School's Website: <http://www.brooklynfriends.org/atbfs/0304/04.26.04-2.html#videos>.

Meeting with Architects

After social hour on Sunday, February 13, Friends gathered to view plans for improvements in the Meetinghouse prepared by our architects, Paul Segal and Michael Prybil. These plans were based on the needs expressed by meeting committees. This was an opportunity to ask questions, contribute ideas and consider what improvements are most urgent.

We looked at plans for the outside of the building and the surrounding space for basic repairs as well as ways of enhancing its presence in the neighborhood. In the interior of the building we considered handicapped access, improving interior and natural light, adding storage arrangements to accommodate our many different groups and uses, improving acoustics and ventilation in the meeting room and undertaking minor repairs and improvements in the mechanical systems.

The group felt that the most urgent needs were to provide adequate handicapped access to the meeting room, to make necessary external repairs and to redesign the outside space on the side of the building to make it more attractive and to provide for a garden and a safe play area for the children. The complete plan incorporating suggestions by this group will be presented to the March Meeting for Business. As many Friends were not able to be present, the plans will remain on display and members of the Property Committee will be available to answer questions and receive suggestions during social hour.

SILENT RETREAT, JANUARY

by Tom Rothschild

The fire is kindled. Dinner ended, we sit in the Powell House library, watching the flames, awaiting the silence soon to enfold us. Linda Chidsey invites us to speak: Where are we from, why are we drawn to three days of silence? We are from Pennsylvania: an elder to hold us all in prayer and serve as companion for Linda; from New Jersey, New York City, Albany, the Adirondacks, western New York State, Connecticut, even England. From larger Quaker meetings,

smaller meetings, worship groups. An ordained Episcopal deacon, troubled by National Guard membership, seeks discernment: Am I a conscientious objector? Do Quakers offer the right path for me? For others, a time to mourn losses, rejoice in relationships and examine them, discern leadings, consider work, relationship to one's meeting. My ordinary chatter, inner and outer talking, all of this I wish to leave on the altar: Let the fire consume it. Above all, preparing to dive deep into silence and into worship.

Morning. We enter a daily rhythm of Quaker practice. First worship in the library. Then breakfast. In the silence we maintain at all our meals, tasting food in a new way, drawing a different nourishment from it, a nourishment as much for the soul as for the body.

Outside, crisp brightness of winter snow, perhaps a walk to the nearby bird sanctuary, to Dorson's Rock, a height from which to look across long valleys to distant mountains. Inside, the warmth of the fire, of soul companions met just yesterday. Later, sharing in work for Powell House, still no sound, except for the jarring dissonance and harmonious resolution of the piano being tuned.

Afternoon. Time for reflection, time to speak. What has the silence brought thus far? Reflecting one another, upholding one another, drinking together the deep upwellings of the Spirit.

Evening. Active silence. In our communal space, each brings one's own work: writing, needlepoint, reading, drawing, whatever we are called to do. The time shared in silence, individual yet together, somehow strengthens our sense that we are a community.

First-Day morning. Worship as a community in the Anna Curtis youth center. A great fire greets us in the open hearth, radiating its warmth across the chilly air. And our spirits bask in the glow of the youth who have worshipped there. The love they share so often in that room seems to infuse us, as we hear and uphold one another in the messages we are given to offer.

Our final morning. Again, early worship and a silent breakfast. The embers seemed dying, but with care the fire blazes up once more. Ending the silence, we share what we have received, what we have given, the ways in which each of us is moving towards the Light.

A final meal shared, no longer in silence. Dispersing, we remain united in that moment, which with care can be even this present moment.

A silent retreat, January 2005, under the care of Powell House and the School of the Spirit.

POETRY

Who Is This God?

Who is this God, whom I encounter in the depths of my soul?

The Eternal One, and beyond that—the unknowable.

Who is this God, whom I encounter when I truly meet another?

The momentary One, who dwells between us.

Who is this God, who tickles me and wrestles with me?

It matters not, who you are—

What matters is that in Our meetings—

You are and I am.

*Aaron Cohen, 1995, the year my
daughter Anna, was born.*

The invisible world sings songs to me—songs without words or music.

I know this, because at such times, my heart wells up with joy.

The invisible world holds me and protects me.

I know this, because at such times, my body rests in peacefulness.

The invisible world creates me and the world anew in every moment.

I know this, because at such times I dwell in Eternity's sunrise.

*Aaron Cohen, 2003, written to
Anna, my daughter.*

Brighter than a thousand suns!

Yet, You do not consume me.

You enfold me in Peace.

You enfold me in Joy.

You enfold me in Love.

I have journeyed to you.

I let go of my possessions.

I let go of my knowledge.

I let go of myself.

Aaron Cohen, vocal ministry at our Meeting.

Earth change long resisted
until against itself
it pulls and quakes
beneath the sea
and shakes the globe
upon its edge
and moves the sea
to overtake the land
reclaiming all as its own

Quiet now to reveal
empty bodies, parts not yet taken away
lives remaining
 in shock
 in pain
 alone
together in risk
to join the quickly taken
as they drink their own waste
and eat what they can
in paradise

Away in distant lands
the New Years' celebrations grow
and memories of small pains dwarfed
that "changed the world"
life changes made dim
call forth some easy help
until the pictures fade
and pain can be ignored again

Forgetting or overwhelmed
on their own
moving toward or away
many caught between the two
intersecting
waiting to be saved
The time is now
the place is for all
where we are not saved from pain
but saved even in the midst of pain
not saved from our helplessness
but even in our helplessness
not from death
but even in death
still able to feel
 to be human
 to live
Loved in life eternal
we are given all
so we can bring help that transcends our shared helplessness
bring comfort and joy that transcends our shared pain
Faithful through the cross
beyond the cross
all are saved

Robert Wilber

RE-THINKING RUFUS JONES

by Michael L. Black, Clerk, History Committee, Brooklyn Monthly Meeting

From January 17 to 21, 2005, I attended a conference, “Re-Thinking Rufus Jones for the Twentieth-First Century,” at Pendle Hill, in Wallingford, Pennsylvania.

The conference, with six participants, was led by Professor Stephen Angell, of the Earlham School of Religion, who intends to write a study of Jones’s ideas. The conference was, in some respects, an effort by him (highly successful) to present Jones (1863-1948) as a thinker and activist.

I took along with me the video prepared by Lyn Pyle and Jim Morgan of the 1998 Rufus Jones conference sponsored by NYQM, and, although I did not have time to view it, both Stephen and one of the participants (Laurence Sigmond) were very impressed by it, particularly because of the remarks of Stephen Cary, who was both a student of Jones and also a chairman of AFSC. Laurence intends to edit this video, put it into DVD format, and make the edited version available on the Pendle Hill web site. In addition, we viewed another video, Rufus Jones: A Luminous Life 1863-1948, from Wellesley Month Meeting (available through the Pendle Hill Bookstore).

It was my first stay at Pendle Hill, and not knowing much about Quaker institutions of this sort, I was a little nervous and did not know exactly what to expect.

However, the group was very congenial, and Stephen’s leadership contributed greatly to a sense among all of us participants that we were doing something very worthwhile.

He is extremely knowledgeable about Quaker history (he teaches a course in Quakerism at Earlham, which is also available on-line), and his command of both American and world history is remarkable. Not only has he written and published on Quaker matters, but his forthcoming book on African-American religion from the University Press of Florida is eagerly anticipated. He also told us about the digital collection of Quaker-related material at Earlham, which is accessible by computer.

The week combined old-fashioned theology (such as the classic proofs of the existence of God and heresies of the Church) with Quaker history and customs, as well as read-

ings in Jones on matters such as mysticism and the union of science and religion. We learned (or reviewed) not only the works of and ideas of classic Christian thinkers, but we also were introduced to, among others, Rosemary Moore, Walter Malone, Wil Cooper, Melvin Eddy, George Fox White, Isaac Hopper, George Barton, Philip Gulley, William and Pam Taber, and Joel Bean.

Jones was a prolific author (over fifty books), he published frequently in both British and American periodicals (for instance, he contributed a weekly editorial to *The American Friend* for over twenty years, probably writing each on the over-night train from Haverford to Earlham, Indiana, where the publication was based), and he was frequently in demand as a speaker at colleges and universities.

He was also an activist, helping to found the American Friends Service Committee (which he chaired for years), participating in numerous inter-faith efforts, and he made numerous trips to Europe and Asia (for example, he met Gandhi in 1926).

Each of us now has a project on Rufus Jones. Mine is a study of the first year of *The American Friend* (1894), which combined *The Friends Review* and *The Christian Worker*. I want to see what Jones did to make this into an important Quaker periodical.

I have done some research in American periodicals of the 19th century (both magazines and newspapers) and have often found them a rich source of information, a source that many historians and scholars do not consider as carefully as they should.

I was particularly interested in one of the Xeroxes from this journal, which listed “Recent Arrivals in France” in the issue of July 27, 1918, among who was John Leslie Hotson from Brooklyn. I intend to go through other issues, to learn of other arrivals from Brooklyn and from New York City.

All of came away from this very pleasant and very stimulating week convinced that, indeed, Rufus Jones has a great deal to say about the 21st century.

READING RUFUS JONES TODAY I AM MYSTIFIED

by Mary Pags

In preparation for a discussion of Rufus Jones, I read *Essential Writings* from cover to cover and continue to be mystified. Rufus Jones has a lot to say to us today about the experience of God. And a lot to teach us. Everyone, he tells us, is a mystic. Including children. Especially children. I asked: How can that be? Because, he explained, they are not yet tainted with the anxieties and stressors of daily life. Children are, in fact, more sensitive to “intimations, flashes, and openings” and have “more room for surprise and wonder.” The invisible awe and wonder of the Inner Light can and does “impinge on their souls.” We simply need to see them with “new eyes.”

How do we adults know when and if we have had a mystical experience? According to Rufus Jones, it is when we are “convinced” that our human spirit and “divine Spirit have met, have found each other, and are in mutual and reciprocal correspondence as spirit with Spirit.” Is it, I wonder, during those times of continuing revelation? When we feel God being revealed to us yet again and again? Perhaps. But we call that an “aha” moment or, maybe a spiritual encounter, but a “mystical” experience? Whatever language we use, we have experienced God. For me, those moments are awesome and fill me with wonder. Wonder at why it took me so long to see. So long to behold my relationship with God--the meeting of spirit and Spirit--as mystical.

Does a child know when she or he has had an experience with God? I don't know. But I do know when I am being moved by the wonder and awe of a child--or an adult--and I am swept, without will, and for a moment, unaware of my own will, into the experience of God where spirit and Spirit “are in mutual and reciprocal correspondence.”

As I continued with Rufus, I recalled a young girl once asking why it was that all wonderful and beautiful things happen when we are not looking and we always get to see the ugly and bad things. The response was something like this: who knows, that's the just the way it is. Why? Rufus tells us we need to see with new eyes.

The experience of God is all around us if we dare to look and behold: a poem, music, the sun as it rises and sets, the rain, the snow, a smile, a tear, a cup of tea, holding a baby, love.

Whether “aha” or “mystical” the experience of God is clear to me when Ben stands at meeting and shares with us his wonder and awe at how people helped each other during a fire and no one was hurt. His was a message of faith and miracles. I see it when taking part in a silent march and a young man approaches us in silence, stands with us for a while, and feels the need to share that he went to a Quaker school and has learned how to take “meeting” with him wherever he goes. God is revealed in the words of a BFS alum when she tells me that what she took from BFS that she always carries with her is the importance of reflection, inclusion, and equality. It is a profound experience when Giancarlo smiles and I hear his voice. During my Commitment Ceremony I was so aware of my experience of God as I looked around the room at all our Friends and heard the voices of the children. And it was so moving when we told Barbara that we would get the flowers that morning and she told us no. That, she said was a job of oversight. Our job, she said, was to be with the Spirit. It is during moments like these when I am convinced that I am living in the experience of the Light. Seeing, beholding, as Rufus Jones urges us, “with new eyes.”