

**New York Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends**

InfoShare

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June 2007

Number 3

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Highlights of June *InfoShare*

This issue of *InfoShare* includes job announcements, invitations to worship, the report of the General Secretary's Task Group, the general secretary job description, an article on the importance of ground rules, information on NYYM's peace minutes on the Web site, and much more.

Please share this information with others.

Christopher Sammond's Travel Calendar

June 1–July 31, 2007

June

6 Oswego Worship Group

8–10 Farmington-Scipio Spring Gathering

9- Auburn Prison Preparative Meeting

21–22 Joint Retreat (leadership from NYYM, Quaker United Nations Office, AFSC, etc.)—Purchase Meetinghouse

26 Chatham Summit Retreat Planning Group, Chatham, N.J.

30 FGC Gathering, River Falls, Wisconsin

July

1–7 FGC Gathering- River Falls, Wisconsin

16–18 FUM Board Retreat—Plainfield, Indiana

21–28 NYYM Annual Sessions—Silver Bay

An Invitation

Ernie Buscemi, Lee Haring, and Christopher Sammond, NYYM's clerk, assistant clerk, and general secretary, invite others in the Yearly Meeting body to join us in prayer every second and fourth Wednesday from 12:30 to 1:30 P.M.. Come join us, or if you cannot be physically present, join us from where you are. On June 13 we will meet in the Yearly Meeting office; for the rest of the summer we will meet in 15th Street Monthly Meeting's worship room. We will be holding the Yearly Meeting in prayer with the particular concern for our moving forward as a unified body with a common vision

and direction, but Friends are welcome to hold the Yearly Meeting as they are led.

Earlham College Seeks Interim Director of Campus and Quaker Ministries

Earlham College invites applications for an interim director of Campus and Quaker Ministries. This is a one-year full-time position with full college benefits, reporting to the Provost. The director will provide leadership and administrative support for all aspects of religious life at Earlham College for the 2007-2008 academic year. This position will be responsible for providing continuity in the College's commitment to religious life activities while the College reexamines its approach to campus ministries and searches for permanent leadership in this area.

Note: As of June 11, 2007, this position has been filled.

Minister Wanted

Smith Neck Friends Meeting, 594 Smith Neck Rd., South Dartmouth, Mass., is seeking a full-time pastor for a programmed meeting in a rural seaside community. Gifts for working with the youth and community outreach are important. A parsonage is provided. For more information please contact Anne Lopoulos, 407 Bakerville Rd., Dartmouth MA 02748 or lopoulos@comcast.net.

Eastern Prison Preparative Meeting Annual Retreat

The annual retreat of the Eastern Preparative Meeting will be held July 7, 2007, 9 A.M. until 3 P.M.

Eastern is in Napanoch, N.Y., in the Shawangunk Mountains in Ulster county, a few miles east of Ellenville off route 209.

Come for all or part of the day and meet our incarcerated members and attenders.

Gate clearance is easy, but must be requested by June 15. Notify David Goodwin of the New Paltz meeting, e-mail dppg619@aol.com.

Site for Old Chatham Meetinghouse

As clerk of Powell House Committee, I'd like to let you know of progress we have made, working with Old Chatham Monthly Meeting on their meeting-house site. We have all approved going forward with building on the main campus! I would especially like to tell you of the final moments as the Powell House Committee and members of Old Chatham Monthly Meeting stood together, considering the land between Pitt Hall and Knoll House last January, trying to imagine a meetinghouse there, instead of brambles. It's a much larger space than I think of in my mind's eye, so it was amazing to see the brightly colored stakes marking out the position of a good-sized building! But more amazing, at that moment, as we turned back to reenter Pitt Hall—a bald eagle flew over, low and, well, huge! With such a blessing as that, the site must be meant for a meetinghouse! Take a look there next time you visit Powell House. We hope you'll agree.

Melanie-Claire Mallison

We Are Building, and We Are Building It Green!

Powell House, the conference and retreat center of NYYM, is planning its renovations of the Anna Curtis Youth Center for the summer of 2008. We are going to make the building more accessible to those with allergies and mobility issues as well as decrease our energy footprint. Can you help?

We are looking for NYYM resource people: Quaker folks, alumni of the Youth Program, gleaners and gophers and getters. We want to hear from those who work in the construction trades, volunteers who can help procure second-hand materials, and people who work in building sales. Do you know good sources? We want to hear from you.

We need to know who you are and how you want to get involved in this project. Powell House is your home and your community. Get in touch. Contact Liseli Haines at (518) 794-8811 ext 14 or liseli@powellhouse.org.

Annual Memorial Meeting at Greenfield

Friends are invited to the Southern Catskills for the Annual Memorial Meeting of the Greenfield (N.Y.) Monthly Meeting and a potluck picnic Saturday, June 16, 2007, Greenfield Park, N.Y., at 1:00 P.M.
at One PM

The Greenfield Preparative Meeting began in 1809. Hicksite carpen-

ter/missionaries built the Greenfield meetinghouse in 1821–22 and built the Grahamsville (N.Y.) meetinghouse in the following year. Grahamsville Monthly Meeting (now known as Catskill Monthly Meeting) is still active. Greenfield was laid down in 1929. The Greenfield meetinghouse and adjacent Friends cemetery are under the stewardship of the Town of Wawarsing.

Greenfield Park is six miles west of downtown Ellenville, N.Y., on Highway 52.

Friends are invited to participate in a potluck picnic at the rise of meeting, about 2:30 P.M.

For more information call Steve Smith at 212-924-6725.

Nurturing Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups June 22–24, 2007, Powell House

Facilitators: Jane Berger, Carol Holmes, and Denise Sherman

This is a weekend about deepening your community's spiritual life and opening your doors wide to the rest of the world to share what you're finding.

As an individual you might have discovered private spiritual practices that nourish you from day to day, between meetings for worship. Well, in addition to your personal practice, there are communal practices your meeting or worship group can engage in that will deepen the experience of worship for everyone.

We'll be using large-group discussions, small-group conversations, brainstorming, handouts from Carol, skits with Jane, and games with Denise to explore and experience some of these community practices that you can take back home with you.

Along with deepening your corporate spiritual life, we'll also talk about how to make your meeting or worship group more visible to the world at large, how to attract newcomers to your group, and—most important—how to keep newcomers coming back until they're on their way to becoming old-timers.

Register online at www.powellhouse.org, call 518-794-8811, or send e-mail to info@powellhouse.org

Come to Quaker Camp!

A time for worship, reflection, and healing divisions among Friends

June 22–24, 2007: "YFNA / WGYF: Past, Present and Future" Reunion and Envisioning a Future YF Movement

For decades, YFNA brought together Friends from all branches of Quakerism in a rich spiritual community. If you were part of Young Friends of North America, or have attended a World Gathering of Young Friends, you know the power of being in community with Friends from different traditions. Is it time for a new version of YFNA? This will be a weekend for past, present and future young adult Friends, where we can share stories, ways these gatherings affected our lives, plans and visions for the future.

June 24–29, 2007: "Quaker Camp at Stillwater"

Following the reunion, we invite all Friends hungry for spiritual community to join us for a time for worship, reflection, conversation, and play. We hope to bring together Friends from all branches of Quakerism, to share what Spirit-led Quakerism is about at its core—and to experience it together.

Housing and meals will be at the Olney Friends School. For details, see www.quakersong.org/quakercamp/ or contact the planning group at quakercamp@gmail.com.

Hector Aristizábal Will Speak at Silver Bay

A scheduled speaker, Henry Lickers, will not be able to come to Silver Bay this year. In his place, we are privileged to have Hector Aristizábal as a speaker.

Hector was born in Medellín, Colombia, a city plagued by violence from the drug trade and from the country's decades-long civil war. He recalls, "I buried most of the kids with whom I played soccer." He assumed his own life would be short too, but his life changed when he obtained a scholarship to Antioquia University in Medellín.

In 1982, Hector and his younger brother were arrested and tortured. Hector's brother was sent to prison, but Hector was eventually released.

He continued to work as a human-rights activist, psychologist, and actor until 1989, when he fled to the U.S. He works as a therapist with torture survivors, gang members, prisoners, AIDS patients, and low-income immigrant families. He is also a cofounder of the Colombia Peace Project, the

Colombian Children's Peace Fund, and the Los Angeles Center for Theater of the Oppressed.

(Text adapted from an article in *The Sun* magazine at www.thesunmagazine.org/358_Aristizabal.pdf.)

Opportunity: Worship-Sharing Facilitators Needed for Silver Bay
Joseph Garren, for CCMC

Worship-sharing group leaders are needed during Yearly Meeting this summer. Worship-sharing groups will meet Monday through Friday, July 23–27, from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M.

Worship sharing provides an opportunity to worship together near the beginning of the day, setting the tone for other activities as the day unfolds. Sharing insights, experiences, and prayer together refreshes the spirit. Your contribution, opening participants to be a channel for the Holy Spirit, will be invaluable.

If you will lead a worship-sharing group, please reply as soon as possible to Joe Garren at joegarren@2ndstreetcafe.com or telephone 718-768-2969. We hope you will feel led to contribute to the Yearly Meeting in this way.

Healing Work at Summer Sessions
Buffy Curtis and Committee

Calling all Friends who work in the healing arts or are interested in helping with healing work! One of the tents will have regularly scheduled hours for healing work this year at Summer Sessions. A committee has been formed to oversee this work, including Buffy Curtis, Kathy Slattery, Ron Peterson, and a member of Coordinating Committee on Ministry & Counsel.

We are looking for volunteers who would offer their skills in the healing arts and/or those who wish to support the work by greeting and scheduling. Skills can include energy work (Healing Touch, Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, etc.), massage, Rolfing, craniosacral, spiritual counseling/direction, or other areas of healing work and training with qualifications or experience to practice. Friends who are "called" to the work are welcome to "buddy" with other practitioners as possible. We will need people to meet and greet and help match those desiring work with the practitioners available.

Please contact Buffy Curtis, buffy@powellhouse.org or call 518-794-8811 x 10 or 508-566-6639 (cell) to offer your assistance, make suggestions, or let

us know what else you need. We plan to talk and meet with volunteers before the start of Silver Bay sessions to organize and clarify details.

We look forward to hearing from lots of you by July 14.

Tagless Tag Sale at Silver Bay

Anne Wright

Friends, as you plan for Yearly Meeting, please remember to pack a box or two (or more) of items in good condition that you no longer need or use. Please don't take books (except for children's books), shoes, or clothes. But jewelry, scarves, knickknacks, kitchen and dining items, toys and games, tapes, videotapes, electronics, etc., will help us to turn your unwanted items into income for Powell House and the Sharing Fund.

Posters on campus and a notice in the *Minute* will advise you where to leave items at the beginning of the week. If you know now that you will be available before, during, and/or after the Fun(d) Fair and you want to help, please e-mail sing2b@gmail.com. There will also be a sign-up sheet near the message board in the Inn at Silver Bay for those who wish to help.

Thank you!

Race and Ethnicity in the Criminal-Justice System

The Black Concerns Committee is starting a working group on the institutional underpinnings of the prison system in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Recent work suggests that in New York, the criminal-justice system has social, political, and economic features that channel material benefits from downstate communities of color to upstate white communities. The working group will explore this situation, sometimes referred to as "the new slavery," by collaborating with existing policy-study groups and compiling a body of documentation into a report on the state of "the new slavery" in the geographic area of NYJM.

In a second phase of the project, the working group will publicize the findings through release of the report and development of an interactive program that can be offered to Quaker meetings and other interested organizations.

Eddie Ellis will lead the working group's first workshop/retreat "Race and Ethnicity in the Criminal Justice System." Eddie, a criminal justice activist, is a former member of the Greenhaven Quaker Prison Worship Group and co-founder of the NuLeadership Policy Group. NuLeadership is based at Med-

gar Evers College and seeks to give formerly incarcerated adults more input into the debates that shape their lives. Eddie also hosts *On The Count!* a weekly broadcast on WBAI that tackles prison issues.

Friends who are interested in participating in this project should contact Jeff Hitchcock (jeffhitchcock@euroamerican.org, 908-241-5439); or any member of the Black Concerns Committee. Their contact information is in the *Yearbook*.

Themes for *Spark*

The last several issues of *Spark*, each focusing on a specific theme, have been very well received. Our plans for upcoming issues are

- September 2007, Stewardship/Earthcare
- November 2007, Starting and Nurturing First-Day Schools
- January 2008, Racism
- March 2008, Developing Leadership
- May 2008, Young Adult Friends

Future themes under consideration are Bringing Life to Business Meeting, Discernment, Public Witness in Small Towns/Rural Areas, Spiritual Openings, Visitation/Traveling in the Ministry, Overseas Ministry, Healing, Faithfulness, and Nurturing the Life of the Meeting.

Friends who would like to work on these issues, or who have suggestions for further themes, are encouraged to contact the editor, Paul Busby, and/or Christopher Sammond, NYYM general secretary, at the Yearly Meeting office.

25 Years of Peace Education

In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE), a three-day symposium will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from August 8–10 2007. This special event is intended as an opportunity for reflection on the evolution of the international peace-education movement over the past quarter century and to help launch a new and intense initiative in the development and dissemination of peace education for the future. The event will offer demonstrations of lessons learned, developed, and practiced by IIPE participants and others.

The IIPE is collaboratively planning the event with the UN Department of Public Information. Preregistration is required for UN security clearance

purposes. A nominal participation fee will be charged (\$25–50) to cover general expenses.

Official program details and registration materials are available on the Web at <http://www.tc.edu/PeaceEd/iipe/25th.htm>.

Quaker Street Meeting Celebrating 200th anniversary

On September 29, 2007, Quaker Street Monthly Meeting invites everyone to join in celebrating its 200th anniversary. Please join us in worship, singing, a brief history of the meetinghouse, and a time to share on "If These Walls Could Speak."

Our featured speaker will be Paul Lacey, clerk of the Board of Directors of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Paul has been involved with AFSC for more than 50 years. His theme will be "Quaker Street Meeting: 200 Years of Seeking and Finding."

We will also have potluck finger foods at lunchtime.

Quaker Street Meeting is three miles west of Duanesburg on Route 7, a beautiful part of N.Y. State.

Friends are encouraged to carpool to this event.

For more information please contact Dorothy Garner, 518-234-7217.

AFSC/Interfaith Peace-Builders Olive Harvest Delegation to Israel/Palestine

October 27–November 10, 2007

Join the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Interfaith Peace-Builders (IPFB) this fall to travel to Israel/Palestine. Your participation as an eyewitness to the situation will enrich your understanding of the conflict and empower your work back in the United States.

This delegation provides an excellent opportunity to participate in the Palestinian olive harvest season—generally a time of great community activism, where people of all ages from Palestine, Israeli peace and justice groups, and international groups join farmers as they reap their harvest. International support for the harvest in many cases makes the harvest possible. In addition to expressing solidarity, participants in the delegation will learn about obstacles that impact the harvest.

In addition to several days helping with the harvest, the delegation will meet with 'ordinary' Israelis and Palestinians, and people and organizations working for peace and justice. Delegates will confront and analyze the U.S. role in the conflict and wrestle with ways to translate your experience to others when you return home.

For further information contact

- Interfaith Peace-Builders national office, 1326 9th St. NW, Washington DC 20001; middleeast@forusa.org; 202-244-0821; www.forusa.org/programs/ipb
- AFSC Middle East Peacebuilding Program, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia PA 19102; israelpalestine@afsc.org; 215-241-7874; www.afsc.org/faces-of-hope

Beyond Diversity 101

Niyonu D. Spann will be facilitating Beyond Diversity 101, a five-day intensive workshop, at **Pendle Hill June 25–30, 2007.**

Oppression and injustice are rampant in our society. Systems based on a power-over relationship keep resulting in dysfunctional communities and organizations. But most diversity trainings get stuck in assigning blame and increasing guilt. For eight years, Niyonu Spann's Beyond Diversity 101 has shown a way to move forward—by taking responsibility, shifting mindsets, and building skills.

Beyond Diversity 101 is for teachers, workshop leaders, and others who choose to be aware of what we have created and want to transform in terms of human difference and power.

Niyonu D. Spann, the dean of Pendle Hill, has been leading diversity trainings for over 15 years. She was featured speaker at NYYM Sessions at Silver Bay in 2006.

To find out more call Pendle Hill, 610-566-4507 or 800-742-3150, ext. 3, e-mail registrar@pendlehill.org, or visit www.pendlehill.org.

Peace Minutes Are on the Web Site

During the past few years New York Yearly Meeting has approved four minutes relating to our peace witness:

- the Worship and Action for Peace minute, approved July 26, 2002
- the Gospel of Peace minute, approved July 27, 2002

- a minute on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation, approved April 1, 2006
- a minute on Refraining from War against Iran, approved April 4, 2007

These minutes are available on NYYM's Web site at www.nyym.org/peace.

Peace Minutes Are on the NYYM Web Site

Since September 11, 2001, NYYM has approved four minutes related to peace: Worship and Action for Peace Minute, approved July 26, 2002; the Gospel of Peace Minute, approved July 27, 2002; a minute on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation, approved April 1, 2006; and a minute on Refraining from War against Iran, approved April 14, 2007. These minutes are posted on our Web site at www.nyym.org/peace.

Peace Vigils in the NYYM Area

Does your meeting or worship group sponsor a peace vigil? If so, please let the Yearly Meeting office know, so it can be listed on the Events section of the NYYM Web site. Send your information to Paul at paul@nyym.org or mail it to Paul Busby, NYYM, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003.

General Secretary's Task Group Report

General Secretary's Task Group: Ruth Ann Bradley, John Cooley, Julia Giordano, Lee Haring, Herb Lape, and Lenore Ridgway (clerk)

The General Secretary's Task Group is united in recommending that the position of general secretary be continued, with the job description kept as defined three years ago. We base our recommendation on responses we have received from Friends, the detailed reports we have received from the general secretary, and our observations of the effects Christopher Sammond has had on meetings and individual Friends.

Charged with evaluating the position of general secretary, the task group has met regularly. We have sent a questionnaire to meetings, worship groups, and Yearly Meeting committee clerks, asking their opinions on the value of having a general secretary. We have sent out to all meetings a biography of Christopher Sammond and the job description, to help them in their consideration, and have followed up with several. Responses, from the meetings and individuals that have answered, have been very positive, both about the position of general secretary and about Christopher's achievements.

The financial state of the Yearly Meeting organization has undergone changes, finally for the better, during the three years of the general secretary's work. In his third year, the budget has a surplus, as a result of improved contributions to the Yearly Meeting and tighter discipline in spending. Our month-to-month cash position is more secure than it was three years ago. We attribute these improvements to the effect of Christopher Sammond's 75 visits to 61 monthly meetings, worship groups, half-yearly, quarterly, and regional meetings.

Improving the interconnectedness between local meetings and the Yearly Meeting has been one of the tasks of the general secretary. With the reconstitution of the Traveling Friends Advisory Group, meeting visitation has been expanded and better organized, and there is better coordination between those Friends visiting meetings. There is more feedback and reporting from visits. Christopher has helped some meetings face internal conflicts and start their healing process. He initiated a series of retreats designed to provide spiritual nurture, he has led workshops throughout the Yearly Meeting, and he has drawn more Friends into Yearly Meeting activities and committees, thus bringing them new members and new ideas. Responses to our survey indicate an increased sense of belonging and working together, using individual gifts.

The Yearly Meeting office is aware of being spirit-led, with a regular staff meeting for worship. Staff responsibilities have been reallocated, to increase work on advancement, use staff gifts better, and meet better the needs of monthly meetings. *Spark* has been modified to speak more directly to Friends' current concerns and be more relevant to monthly meetings and worship groups.

The general secretary's main task has been working with others toward renewal in the Yearly Meeting. Many meetings perceive that the climate of the Yearly Meeting has improved, that there is less contention and more optimism. Many are now giving attention to advancement. The Yearly Meeting body has been exploring Friends' visions for the future of the Yearly Meeting, and Christopher has brought this concern to constituent meetings and helped with their discernment. He has supported numerous Friends in growing more deeply into their gifts, and identified some not currently involved in Yearly Meeting service who have gifts to offer. Finally, as our representative to the FUM Board, Christopher has been active in efforts to reconcile the conflicts between constituent groups and to work toward a common vision of Friends' goals throughout the world.

For all these reasons we recommend maintaining the position of general secretary.

General Secretary Job Description

Responsibilities:

1. Visit monthly, quarterly, and regional meetings, seeking to connect our distant meetings with one another through sharing concerns and ministry.
2. Support and nurture emerging worship groups.
3. Work closely with the clerk of the Yearly Meeting and serve ex officio as a member of the Liaison Committee for the purpose of nurturing the life of the Yearly Meeting community.
4. In conjunction with the Yearly Meeting clerk, maintain a liaison with wider Friends ☐ groups. When necessary and appropriate, interpret the Religious Society of Friends to the wider community in statements and actions, including speaking to the press, which articulate our historic peace testimony and are in keeping with *Faith and Practice*, other Friends ☐ testimonies, and relevant Yearly Meeting minutes. Whenever possible, reference should be made to these sources.
5. Supervise and evaluate the work of the administrative secretary. The general secretary will be ultimately responsible for the overall good functioning of the Yearly Meeting office.

Importance of Ground Rules

Deborah B. Wood, Purchase Meeting

All of us have our own ground rules—expectations of the ways we will interact with other individuals and in group situations. Some of these are part of our culture; some are unique to each individual. Conflicts often happen because people’s ground rules or expectations are not the same.

Any time we move into a new situation, the unspoken ways that the individuals in that group interact are already in place. As a newcomer, I probably would learn some of them by observation, rather than having them explained to me. Some I would discover when I break them.

Some of these expectations are so common in our culture that no one would mention them to someone new coming into a group. For example, if I were invited for dinner at someone’s home at six o’clock, I would plan to arrive no more than five minutes early or late. However, this is not the

same in all cultures. In some places, if one arrived on time, the host could still be in the shower. I heard of someone who was temporarily living in Sweden, and invited for a six o'clock dinner. When the person arrived, a few minutes before six, most of the guests were standing outside the door. At six precisely, all of the guests had arrived, and one person rang the doorbell.

In international negotiations, the parties involved spend months in advance deciding who will be invited to attend, the seating arrangement, what issues will be discussed and which will not, along with a host of other points. Clearly, the ground rules here are firmly established in advance.

Each of us has our own boundaries, behavior that we would find unacceptable under any circumstances. Some of the things we accept as "the norm" we would be willing to change, such as the example of time to arrive for dinner cited above. Other behaviors we would not be willing to go along with. The more aware we become of where our boundaries are, the better we are able to decide whether or not we are comfortable enough with an individual or a group to stay in relationship.

In Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops, one of the first things we do is to explain the six ground rules that we expect everyone to adhere to during the workshop: **1. We look for and affirm one another's good points; 2. We refrain from put-downs, of ourselves or others; 3. We listen to what each person has to say; 4. Volunteer yourself only; speak from your own experience; 5. We observe confidentiality regarding the personal sharing of each participant; 6. Everyone has the right to pass.** These ground rules are stated, explained, and posted. After giving an opportunity for questions and comments, we ask participants to agree to follow the ground rules during the workshop. We also ask that, when anyone observes a ground rule being violated, that person brings it to the attention of the rest of the group. This could be a facilitator or any of the participants. I believe this is one of the reasons why the workshops are successful.

In our monthly meetings, we often do not explain our "ground rules" to newcomers. We expect that they will learn "how things work" in our meeting by observation. Then we are surprised when newcomers don't come back or do not get involved in meeting activities beyond Sunday morning worship. Reading *Faith and Practice* will help attenders become familiar with some of our ways of doing things: becoming a member, marrying un-

der the care of a meeting, and the general structure of the Yearly Meeting. However, the way things happen—the unspoken "norms"—in our monthly meetings could still be a mystery.

In the October 2005 issue of *Friends Journal* on the theme of The Meeting Community, Josh Brown, pastor of West Richmond [Indiana] Meeting and former pastor of Adirondack [N.Y.] Meeting, had an article entitled "Does Your Meeting Need a Bill of Rights?" Over a period of several weeks, one of their adult study groups focused on what a good, healthy, open Friends meeting would look like; the existing meeting policies; and suggestions for new ones. They presented the draft Bill of Rights to the rest of the meeting for discussion, changes, and finally adoption. Some examples of the 10 points they came up with: **You have the right to take part in worship; you have the right to be safe in our church; you have the right to the support and discipline of the church.** Newcomers to that meeting can quickly and easily become aware of the expectations of the meeting. In the article, Josh said that they expected to draft the responsibilities that go along with the rights. (It is definitely worth reading—or rereading!—the entire October 2005 issue of *FJ*.)

In a situation where the ground rules are not explicit, the responsibility for adhering to them is not there. For example, in a business meeting, if the clerk has not reminded the meeting to address the clerk and consider the business in a spirit of worship, it should not be a surprise when the meeting becomes contentious or in other ways fails to live up to the promise of our process. If most of those in attendance are not well grounded in the "ground rules" of our business process, the results can be most disturbing.

Some may prefer a different expression than "ground rules." For me, that phrase expresses my understanding. In a group situation or with an individual, certain behaviors run into a brick wall—my ground rules. When I come up against one of the unspoken norms that a group adheres to, that is also like hitting a brick wall. I need to decide either to go along with that particular ground rule or leave the situation. I need to take responsibility for staying or going, letting the group know the reasons for my actions. As conflicts develop in our monthly meetings, considering them from the perspective of ground rules may help frame a basis for open discussion.

Nurturing Our Core Beliefs

Melanie-Claire Mallison, clerk, Nurture Coordinating Committee

Over the weekend of March 23–25, 2007, 24 people gathered at Powell House to dive deeply into the question Do NYYM Quakers have core beliefs? During our time together, we spoke from our experience, listened to each other's Truth, and well, we laughed a lot. "It highlighted for me that our practices, not our beliefs, are what are central and distinct to Quakerism," one participant noted. The weekend started with discussion of what we each needed in order to feel safe and comfortable in our sharing.

A few of the items we agreed on were: listen for where the words come from, not for agreement; translate as needed—listen in tongues!; carry love with us, and recognize that love is sent our way; and always remember "Welcome, welcome."

In a small group, we shared defining moments in our spiritual path, then, in the whole group, came to such a safe place, a place of such overwhelming trust and honesty, that we became One in our many ways of speaking our beliefs. Spirit bound us together, allowed us to listen with open hearts and voice our understanding of the Light. One participant described it thus: "As a newcomer, I found this experience to both intimidating and insightful. I was treated with the utmost respect and consideration and am grateful for that."

By Saturday evening, we had discerned several statements upon which we could clearly agree—common threads of experience, understanding, belief, and Spirit. By Sunday morning, through the diligent and faithful work of our facilitators weaving the threads together, we had a document to share beyond this place in time. As one participant said, this weekend "helped me feel affirmed in my Quaker witness. I heard many voices 'speaking to my condition'."

The statement we heard at our closing worship is written below. We offer up our words to our friends in New York Yearly Meeting and beyond. We offer our words to you to consider, where you are, with those you worship with, to test our Truth. We offer to you the Light that did brighten us all in unity. We invite you to read these words with the same open and listening heart, the same Spirit in which they were written. Not to agree or disagree, but to experience an authentic sharing.

Nurture Coordinating Committee will host an interest group at summer sessions, using this statement, to further discern Truth with Friends. We hope you will join us in this journey.

A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF SOME LIGHT DISCERNED AT POWELL HOUSE 23–25 THIRD MONTH 2007

There is a Power, which we have experienced within us and among us. It is the most real thing that we know. It is a mystery beyond our knowledge. We call it by the names we are able to hear. It is made known by its working in our lives. These words arose out of our experience of being gathered into the Life. We invite you to consider these words out of your experience of the Life; we invite you to enter into that Power and see what words arise.

We all have direct access to and communion with the Light. That Light reveals the darkness within and around us, and the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend (understand/extinguish) it.

The community of faith helps us to discern the Light, embodies Spirit and makes it accessible, gives us courage to face the darkness, and knows us as we are, in the Light.

The Light constantly reveals itself to us in unforeseen ways. All of us are capable of receiving this revelation and are responsible for practicing the disciplines of faithfulness—constantly turning toward the light—and integrity—allowing the Light to illuminate our whole selves, and obeying it in all aspects of our whole lives. We test its leadings through discernment in and accountability to our community, under the guidance of Spirit.

We are called to acknowledge all people as our neighbors, broken, beloved, and blessed as we ourselves are. We know that all Creation is held in the divine Love, as we ourselves are. We are called into that Love.

The Divine Love is always present to us. When we are present to it, we experience unity and healing in the midst of our brokenness. We are called into this love so that we may share it with our neighbors. When we as individuals or communities experience divine Love, we realize that we need nothing else and we are able to let go all other securities so that nothing may separate us from the Life.

This love is a gift and a grace; it is also a commandment and a discipline. It binds us together and sets us free.

Our Quaker practice begins with stillness, releasing all distractions that hinder us from experiencing and channeling the ever-present Love. In the gathered meeting Friends wait faithfully upon the Spirit, and so become channels of the divine healing love. The Meeting answers that of God in

each person, affirms that, calls that forth, holds the person accountable to that. As a gathered community we do not seek agreement, consensus, or mutual satisfaction for our separate selves; we seek unity in the Spirit, which makes us one. Our corporate actions are based on this unity.

We seek to lay aside ego and opinion and sink down to the Seed so that our corporate words and actions arise from the Divine Love. This love prompts us to reach out to those who are suffering and to work for justice in the world.

Here I Am, Lord

Ernestine and Vincent Buscemi have written a pamphlet entitled *Here I am, Lord* a spiritual autobiography of their "experiential walk into the silence of God's listening which awakens the consciousness of our true selves. And when that true self is stirred in the stillness, an opening takes place where we can freely dedicate our lives to complying with the will of God when called to service."

This booklet is on discerning callings and being faithful to them. "We are creatures of habit and we do what is comfortable. Faith however inspires action; it produces doers. And those faithful to the obedience, to the urging of the Spirit are moved into service." The prayer "Here I am, Lord" is the willingness to move into a growth relationship with God and places us on the way to bring about peace, joy, and justice.

Here I Am, Lord is published by Southeastern Yearly Meeting. You may contact them or www.quakerbooks.org for information.