

New York Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

InfoShare

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Don't Miss Fall Sessions!

There's still time to register for Fall Sessions for 2008, which will be held November 7–9 at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, N.Y. (Saturday and Sunday), and at Powell House in Old Chatham, N.Y. (Friday evening and Saturday evening).

Complete information about Fall Sessions is in the September 2008 *Spark* and at www.nyym.org/events/fallsess08, along with registration information and directions.

The weekend will begin Friday at 7:30 P.M. at Powell House in Old Chatham, N.Y. Ann Davidson will facilitate an evening of community building. On Saturday and Sunday, we will gather at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, N.Y. Directions are on the NYYM Web site at www.nyym.org/events/fallsess08/#direx.

Registration: The registration fee is \$15 per adult until October 30, 2008; after October 30, add \$5 per adult. You may register in two ways: Fill out the registration form on the Web site, save it with a new name, and e-mail it to Claire Cafaro, Cafaro@verizon.net, or fill out the form from the Web site, print it, and mail it to Claire Cafaro, 4 Bluebird Ct., Saratoga Springs NY 12866. In either case, mail your check for registration and meals, made out to NYYM, to Claire before the October 30 registration deadline. You may also pay by using the PayPal Buy Now button below. If you use PayPal please add a \$3.00 service charge.

After October 30, registration fees increase and hospitality and meals cannot be guaranteed.

Prayer Support

Do you feel the need for prayer support?

If you would like the prayer support of Friends in New York Yearly Meeting for any reason, please contact Bobbi Sue Bowers at nyym.prayerlist@gmail.com or 732-919-1261. Your name will be placed on a prayer list sent weekly to Friends who feel led to pray for others. You can be on the list in several ways:

- Your name by itself
- Your name with a brief description as to why
- Your name with an asterisk, which indicates that you do not want to be contacted or asked why you are on the list

Please do not submit someone else's name without their permission.

Do you feel led to a practice of intercessory prayer?

If you feel led to provide prayer support for Friends in New York Yearly Meeting, please contact Bobbi Sue Bowers at nyym.prayerlist@gmail.com or 732-919-1261. Each week you will receive a prayer list with a list of Friends who feel the need for prayer support. Friends may include a brief description as to why, or just their name.

If you would like to receive the prayer list but do not have e-mail, please contact Bobbi Sue to request a hard copy.

Friends are encouraged to take up intercessory prayer in a manner that speaks to them. Some Friends may feel led to practice solitary prayer, some to meet regularly with a prayer group or to hold a meeting for worship for healing, and some, though they may be geographically dispersed, to establish a specific day and time to pray for Friends simultaneously.

Christopher Sammond's Travel Calendar September 25–November 30, 2008

September

- 25 Attend *Iftar* dinner conversation with Iranian President
 Ahmadinejad, New York City
- 28–30 Attend Superintendents and Secretaries Retreat, Twin Rocks,
 OR

October

- 1 Attend Superintendents & Secretaries Retreat, Twin Rocks, OR
- 7–12 Attend FUM Board meetings, Richmond, IN
- 17–20 Facilitate retreat "Who is Jesus to Me?" Orchard Park MM,
 Orchard Park, NY
- 24–26 Singing Weekend, Mohawk Valley MM, Clinton, NY

November

- 7–9 Fall Sessions, Troy, NY
- 20–23 Cofacilitate Quaker Leadership Consultation, Pendle Hill,
 Wallingford, PA

Bedford Stuyvesant Worship Group to Meet

The Bedford Stuyvesant Worship Group will meet at Redemption Center on Sunday November 16 at 2 P.M. Worship will be followed by a fellowship potluck.

The worship group's Care Committee is also trying to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for Redemption residents. If you or your meeting can provide something for the dinner please let one of us know. Members of the Care Committee are Vince Buscemi, vincebuscemi@yahoo.com; Mark Graham, mgraham@theredemptioncenter.net; Jason McGill, jasonmcgill@mindspring.com; and Helen Garay Toppins, office@nyym.org.

The Bedford Stuyvesant Worship Group will also meet on Sunday, December 21.

The Redemption Center is at 1186 Herkimer Street, Brooklyn NY 11233.

Quaker Parents of Military Children

Greta Mickey, Central Finger Lakes Meeting

For any parent, having their child choose to go to war is difficult. Quaker parents experience additional challenges. We struggle to accept our children's decisions in the face of our struggles to find our way, through nonviolence, to peace. We learn to support our children even though we cannot understand or agree with their decisions. We find some modicum of shame, of having failed, in the fact that our children are soldiers and so, in large degree, we are alone. We've been there to see them off to war and to hug them as they get off the bus coming back. We've struggled with being out of the loop as our children struggle to get medical care in "the system."

The traditional support networks for parents of those in the armed services just don't work for us, and so, as the parent of a child in the Marine Corps, I have begun a Quaker support network and invite Quaker parents of those in the armed services to be a part.

It's my hope that we can accompany one another on this unique and difficult journey. If you know of Friends who might benefit from this budding support network please share this e-mail address with them: qpmcsupport@gmail.com or call Greta Mickey at 607-243-5668.

A Deep Unity

(This is an excerpt from proposed revisions to North Pacific Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*. See <http://www.npym.org/docs/faith.pdf> for the current *Faith and Practice*.)

Some Friends have placed particular emphasis on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while others have found more compelling a universal perspective emphasizing the Divine Light enlightening every person. One of the lessons of Friends' history as a religious movement is that an excessive reliance on one or the other of these perspectives, neglecting the essential unity of the two, has been needlessly divisive and has diminished the vitality of the Quaker vision.

The concern of Friends is not that members affirm a particular verbal formulation of this faith but that it be a living and transforming power within their lives. Challenged by the words of Jesus as quoted in Matthew 7:21—"It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven"—Friends do not place emphasis on the naming of God. Instead each is encouraged, in John Woolman's phrase, "to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart." In the course of following this spiritual path, many Friends do come to find great depths of meaning in familiar Christian concepts and language, while others do not. Although sometimes perplexing to the casual observer, this phenomenon does not trouble many seasoned Friends who have discovered a deep unity with one another in the Spirit.

General Secretary's Report 2008 Summer Sessions

After I spoke an oral report as led at Summer Sessions, some Friends asked if I could provide a text. This is a reconstruction:

As I have held questions about what to share about my sense of our condition as a yearly meeting, the quote from the famous Rabbi Hillel has kept coming to me:

If I am not for myself, who is for me?

If I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

Rabbi Hillel

My sense is that we are at a place of pausing, assessing direction, and seeking guidance. We are focusing less on our internal frictions, and we therefore are having more energy to hold questions about how we are called.

I have heard from many Friends of a sense of being ready and willing to devote time, energy, and their very lives to addressing the raft of growing problems in this world, problems which, if left unaddressed, will lead to global crises of an unprecedented nature. And these same Friends, ready and willing, are not clear where or how to begin.

I have witnessed this upwelling of concern and a desire to be of service particularly among the young adult Friends in this Yearly Meeting. I hear a willingness on their part to devote their very lives to the service of making this world a better place, but without the clarity as to how to proceed.

Greta Mickey, our Peace Concerns coordinator, has been in conversations with many Friends from around the Yearly Meeting who are called to doing peace work. As she has talked with these Friends, she has heard that many are holding questions as to whether this yearly meeting, as a body, might be called to some unified witness or work in the world, and what that might be.

At the FGC Gathering, I heard from the adult young Friends there that they feel stuck and unclear as to how to proceed, and they began asking for help from older Friends who may have had that experience in the past.

So I see us as part of a larger body of Friends, who are listening, discerning, waiting for clarity as to how to proceed. And I see an upwelling of energy and willingness to be of service.

In a great many of our monthly meetings, I see most of our energy going into “keeping on keeping on”—just doing what it takes to keep the doors open, and things running. And most of whatever energy is left is usually devoted to working passionately against what is wrong in the world. We are trying our best to mitigate the damage of corrosive systems and influences. This leaves us with precious little energy to create what we want to see in the world.

We need to seek a common vision. We need to be with the question “What

are we trying to create?" If most of our energy is going into self-preservation and working against what is wrong in our world, not much is left for building up the future we want for ourselves.

What are we trying to create?

When I attended the annual NYYM/NEYM pastor's retreat, the facilitator asked all the pastors to name what was special, characteristic, or distinctive of their particular congregation. What is the charism of the group they serve? As one of the participants, I applied that question to this body—what is the charism of NYYM? What came to me were the insights of the mystic Jakob Böhme, who predated Fox by one generation and was thought to have influenced him, along with much of Europe, in the ensuing years, including Blake, Schelling, and others.

Böhme had a vision in which he understood all reality as being made up of two principles, one being the fiery, creative, fruitful principle, and the other, that of love. The fiery, creative principle is neither bad nor good by itself; it just is. What came to me as the charism of this body, what distinguishes us from any other yearly meetings I have experience with, even those that are structurally quite similar, such as Baltimore and New England, is that we have more of this fiery principle than I have witnessed anywhere else.

When this principle is harnessed to, and subordinate to love, what it creates is powerful and good. Without love to temper it, it is a force that can be highly destructive. The image that came to me was that of a steam pipe. If the steam is contained in the pipe, its energy can be useful. If there are leaks in the pipe, it can erupt outwards and do great damage.

I continue to witness a need for us to do better at opening to new energies—from newcomers to our monthly meetings, newcomers to this annual session, from our youth and young adults. I continue to see newer members in monthly meetings whose gifts, ideas, energies, and insights are not being welcomed and included. They are frustrated. When we do not receive what newcomers have to offer, they leave.

We are at risk of becoming a private club. We need to practice being an open circle.

We need to be particularly aware of the gifts of younger Friends in our nomination process, inviting them to be part of the fabric of what we are creating. In preparing this report, the words of Ella Baker, civil rights activist, which were immortalized by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon in "Ella's

Song," have had power for me:

To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run
against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine
on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my
struggle survives*

Finally, in visiting monthly meetings that are flourishing, I have noticed some common patterns and practices that I feel we need to be emulating more broadly.

Best practices of monthly meetings that are growing:

- The joining of advancement and work in the world
- willingness of individuals to take action
- willingness of community to eagerly use the gifts of newcomers
- attentiveness to spiritual grounding
- good clerking and process in business
- individuals who have energy to welcome others into the life of the community
- sense of calling, direction
- energy to start somewhere and get going
- willingness to stick to our practice over the long haul, even when it is difficult

*Ella's Song, Lyrics and music by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Songtalk Publishing Co., © 1981

Friends in Cuba Begin Rebuilding after Hurricane Ike

Information received from Friends United Meeting (FUM)

Hurricane Ike swept over Cuba in early September, wreaking havoc on homes and buildings throughout the island. Repairs are underway, but the cost is high. With very little building material to be had on the island, supplies must be shipped in, increasing the cost. FUM has obtained a license from the U.S. government to carry in up to \$75,000 for food, medicine, and building relief for the meetinghouses and pastoral houses in Cuba. Terri Johns (FUM staff) and Linda Garrison (Iowa YM) will travel to Cuba in early December, to take money, and an FUM Cuba Work Team will leave in January to work on reconstruction of one of the damaged buildings.

Hurricane Ike made landfall in Gibara, Cuba. The people in that area were evacuated and brought to the Friends' church in Gibara, where they stayed in recently constructed dormitories. The church there lost part of its roof—the wind broke through the doors and went out through the roof.

Other meetings lost their roofs as well, including Holguín, Puerto Padre, Velasco, and Delicias. The pastor's homes at Holguín and Puerto Padre were also damaged. During the storm, new buildings constructed in recent years were very useful as shelters for refugees. Well over 100 people were sheltered in both Banes and Gibara, and about 90 in Retrete (amazing to anyone who's seen how small it is!).

On September 14, Ramón González Longoria, clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, and his wife, Rosario, spoke of the massive destruction of homes in many communities of eastern Cuba, but thankfully there were no deaths in the area.

Ramón felt the plans for the Quaker ruins in Holguín are likely to be postponed. (This is the site of the new yearly meeting building begun in January 2008.) Even though the need for food and medical supplies is an obvious concern, Ramón and Rosario emphasized the need for spiritual support. They're already making a lot of jokes and keeping spirits high despite the problems. They know we are praying for them and are grateful.

Friends wishing to contribute to hurricane relief in Cuba are invited to visit www.fum.org for information.

Haiti—Hurricane Relief Efforts

Mary Glenn Hadley, president of United Society of Friends Women International, has requested we get the word out about an urgent appeal for **Hygiene Kits and Infant Kits** for Haiti following the great damage caused by recent hurricanes. Send completed kits to: AFSC Emergency & Material Assistance Program, 606 E. Springfield Rd., High Point, NC 27263

Hygiene Kit: 1 tube toothpaste, 1 toothbrush, 1 bottle shampoo, 1 bar soap (antibacterial or Ivory), 1 comb (wide-toothed), 1 washcloth, 1 small towel.

Infant Kit: 2 receiving blankets, 4 baby washcloths, 1 baby towel, 1 bar baby soap (Ivory or baby liquid soap), 1 small tube or jar petroleum jelly, 2 pairs infant socks or booties.

New Sanctuary Movement

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has released a letter, signed by AFSC's general secretary and the clerk of the AFSC Board and Corporation, that reads in part:

Twenty-five years ago, people of faith all over the United States initiated a grassroots movement which became known as Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Movement provided prophetic hospitality for Central American refugees fleeing violence in their own countries, as well as public witness to their plight and the role played by repressive U.S. policy in the region. This simple yet radical witness, repeated all over the country, eventually changed national policy toward these refugees. It was proof of Friend Jim Corbett's observation: "Individuals can resist injustice, but only in community can we do justice." AFSC was proud to stand in solidarity with the congregations of this movement, providing information, technical assistance and witness in both Central America and the United States.

Now we are faced with enormous numbers of people who have come, and continue to come, to this country fleeing economic violence as well as physical violence. When they reach the U.S., they are confronted with a badly broken immigration policy and are further subjected to abuse and violence. The human rights of immigrants are violated daily through acts of hatred, workplace discrimination, and unjust deportation.

A New Sanctuary Movement was launched in 2007 bringing together faith communities, including Friends Meetings, rights advocates, and legal advisors. Many AFSC program offices have been active in documenting

human rights violations, advocating for more humane immigration policies, and empowering immigrant communities to advocate on their own behalf. Once again we stand in solidarity with this new, growing coalition of conscience....

In September 2008, AFSC's Board of Directors endorsed the New Sanctuary Movement, finding it wholly compatible with Friends' belief that there is that of God in all people, and an expression of our testimony to community. We want to shift the immigration debate to the moral consequences of the current policy and build alliances between non-immigrant communities and our immigrant brothers and sisters. We celebrate the work that is already being done in many communities of faith—they are leading the way. And we encourage Friends to consider how they might join in this witness.

...Two new AFSC resources...will be available to Friends in the coming weeks: *Beyond Borders: Honoring our human dignity*, which looks at some of the facts and myths of immigration, and *Immigration and Friends Testimonies: Seeing that of God in our neighbors*, which helps put immigration issues into a familiar Quaker framework. Additionally, there are many other resources available online at www.afsc.org....

We leave you with the words of AFSC's Central Region Executive Committee, extracted from its Minute endorsing the New Sanctuary Movement:

Our communities include those who are like us and those who are different. Our vision of community welcomes the stranger because there is that of God in him or her. We recognize that immigrants are members of our communities throughout the U.S.

We acknowledge that the same system that allows us to live in abundance and comfort, with inexpensive goods and services, necessitates the underpaid labor of immigrants. We have watched as immigrant families live in ever-greater fear of separation.

Our vision is that our country treats all people fairly, whether they live within or outside of its borders. This vision demands we not remain silent when our government espouses policies that impoverish, exploit, and force people to live in fear.

Because our government has failed ... to treat immigrants justly and with integrity, we are called to oppose policies that threaten to overwhelm that which is precious in human beings ... to accompany

and protect those facing injustice to our greatest ability.

In the light,

Mary Ellen McNish, general secretary, AFSC
Paul Lacey, clerk, AFSC Board and Corporation

Upcoming Powell House Events

A New Look at Jesus and David: What the Women in Their Lives Tell Us (A Friends in the Spirit of Christ Weekend), led By Julia Giordano
 November 14–16, 2008

A Practical Mystic's Guide to Quaker Process, led by Deborah Haines
 November 21–23, 2008

Friends of Bill W. and Dr. Bob, December 5–7, 2008

Powell House's Annual New Years Celebration: Cherish Family and Friends, December 30, 2008–January 1, 2009

For further information, registration, etc.: Powell House, 524 Pitt Hall Rd.,
 Old Chatham NY 12136; 518-794-8811; info@powellhouse.org;
 www.powellhouse.org

Pendle Hill Workshops on Quaker Basics

This winter, Pendle Hill offers weekends on Quaker Basics: Clerking, Recording, Outreach, and the Peace Testimony

A participant in a recent "how-to" weekend at Pendle Hill wrote, "I came to the workshop hoping for some 'tools' for the toolbox and left with the hardware store!" Many Friends serving their meetings as clerks, recording clerks, and committee members find it useful to add to their "toolbox" through workshops with Friends called to the same service. This winter Pendle Hill is offering several workshops with experienced leaders on Quaker meeting essentials

December 5–7, 2008, **Claiming Our Peace Testimony**, weekend workshop with Mary Lord

Investigate the spiritual roots of Quaker peacemaking, share personal peace journeys, and explore the rich heritage of Quaker experiments and experience as peacemakers. What does the peace testimony mean for us

today – for our personal lives, our meetings, and the wider world? Is it practical? Have we made a difference?

January 16–18, 2009, **Recording: Spiritual Discipline and Communal Gift**, weekend workshop with Mario Cavallini and Sondra Ball
For both experienced recording clerks and those who are new, this weekend focuses on both the practical and spiritual dimensions of recording in Quaker business sessions.

January 30–February 1, 2009, **On Being Gathered: A Workshop on Meeting Growth and Revitalization**, weekend with Deborah Haines, Cosponsored by the Advancement and Outreach Committee of Friends General Conference
Participants will look at outreach and meeting growth as extensions of gathered worship and the invisible threads that knit Friends together while attending to the Inward Teacher.

February 6–8, 2009, **Clerking**, weekend with Deborah Fisch and Bill Deutsch
New and experienced clerks will consider the fundamentals of a Quaker meeting for worship with attention to business, discerning and recording the “sense of the meeting,” setting agendas, distinguishing between political and spiritual statements, and exploring ways to deal with difficult issues.

For information or to visit www.pendlehill.org or call at 800-742-3150, ext. 3 (U.S. only) or 610-566-4507, ext. 3 (worldwide).

New Wider Quaker Fellowship Materials Online

The two newest Wider Quaker Fellowship (WQF) reprints are on the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Web site at <http://fwccamericas.org/publications/wqf.shtml>. “Remembering Agnes: A Lesson in Nonviolence” by Margaret Hope Bacon is a version of an excerpt from her book *Love is the Hardest Lesson* (Pendle Hill Publications, 1999). “Finding the Prophetic Voice for Our Time” is a compilation of two worship talks given at the 2007 FWCC Triennial in Dublin, Ireland, by Doreen Dowd of Ireland YM and María Armenia Yí Reyna of Cuba YM.

The Wider Quaker Fellowship has provided excerpts of Quaker writing to Friends and non-Quakers since 1936. Members include incarcerated people, inquirers, people of other faiths who wish to stay connected with Friends, as well as Quakers living in isolated circumstances. All WQF pamphlets

published since 2005 can be found on the FWCC Web site. Future projects include posting archived pamphlets to the site.

WQF does not charge a subscription but depends on contributions for its support. Visit <http://fwccamericas.org/> for information.