



Newsletter of the

Ithaca Monthly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

December 2013

IMM CONTACTS

ithacamonthlymeeting.org

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Listserv:

To join our email list for solely for meeting-related announcements, send an email message addressed to:
IMMRSF-L-request@cornell.edu
with message body as simply: join

Marilyn's List:

To email Friends and others about events in the Ithaca community, broader social causes or other non-specifically Quaker messages that may be of interest to Friends, consider sending your message through Marilyn Ray. To join or contribute, email:
mlr17@cornell.edu

On Spiritual Friendships

I write to remind friends that Holly White will lead a workshop on *Spiritual Friendship* December 1st at 9a.m. (see calendar, page 6), and to share briefly why I value my spiritual friendships.

I've been surprised by how my spiritual friendships deepen my spiritual life. I can be sharing with my friend about some situation I'm caught up in and she'll ask me, "Where is Spirit in this for you?" Suddenly I have an unexpected perspective on what I have been rambling on about. "Oh, obviously it makes sense to focus on this." The non-sense is gone.

Also, my spiritual friendships have helped me learn about prayer. I have often thought that I didn't know how to pray. I shared this concern with a friend and she said, "You already pray. One can pray through movement or color or writing or creativity. I find a book called, *Praying in Color* very helpful." I do know how to pray with color; I've been doing spirit-led drawing for years. Through my spiritual friendships, I have also practiced praying with words.

I'm not always confident when it's my turn to listen. I don't tend to use spiritual language. I hold my friend in love, open to what she has to say. Sometimes the friend I'm listening to identifies her gifts or gets in touch with how she is being led.

I'm looking forward to joining you in Holly's workshop to deepen our understanding of spiritual friendship.

— Nancy Riffer

The Gift of Generosity

This holiday season, we thank everyone who has supported Ithaca Monthly Meeting this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions and look forward to support from all of our members and attenders in the year ahead.

If you need a convenient way to make regular donations we encourage you to look into our electronic giving option, see page 2. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Use the authorization form presented here or contact the Meeting's treasurer, Mike Simkin (mes13@cornell.edu or 607-387-5174) for more information.

— Mike Simkin, Finance Committee



Giving to IMM

To set up electronic donations, simply complete the authorization form on the right and return it to the Treasurer: Mike Simkin, 3137 Jacksonville Rd, Trumansburg, NY 14886. Donations can be debited automatically from either a checking or savings account.

SNAP Reductions

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP, the new name for food stamps) feeds hungry people. SNAP assistance decreased November 1.

In addition, members of Congress are currently debating farm bills and some members are not supportive of SNAP, which means that there could be further reductions this coming year.

Who is assisted by SNAP?

- 76% of households receiving SNAP include a child, an elderly person or a person with a disability.
- The average monthly gross income for a household receiving SNAP is \$744.
- The average benefit per person is less than \$1.50/meal.
- It is estimated that this program benefits 1 in 7 Americans.

When SNAP cuts went into affect at the beginning of November, more than a million NYers who are elderly or disabled saw a cut in their monthly amount.

Many people who have lost a job qualify for awhile until they are again working.

SNAP has provided food support over the recession and higher unemployment of the past few years. After severe flooding in a neighboring community, food stamp use went up for a few months and then back down, as people were able to stabilize their housing needs. More than a third of households receiving SNAP have someone who is working, often for very low wages. In some qualifying households, a caregiver is not working because he or she is providing care to children, elderly or disabled family members. Many people who are eligible do not apply, due to embarrassment or shame at having to ask for help.

Most SNAP benefits are used before the third week of the month and local food

AUTHORIZATION FORM	
Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Inc. ES14909	
Your name:	
Address:	
City, State, Zip:	
Email address:	
I would like to make the following contribution(s):	
<input type="checkbox"/> General Operating Fund	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Fund	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen Cupboard _____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	\$ _____
Total	
Date of first contribution: ___/___/___	
Frequency of contribution (check one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly – Mondays	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly (every other week)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Semi-monthly – 1 st and 15 th	
<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 st	
<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 th	
CHECKING / SAVINGS Complete this section if using your checking or savings account	
Please debit my (check one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Checking account—attach voided check <input type="checkbox"/> Savings account—attach voided deposit slip	
Routing #:	Account #:
Valid routing # must start with 0,1,2 or 3	
I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to the above account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.	
Authorized signature: _____ Date: / /	

banks and soup kitchens see a heavy rise in need at the end of each month.

Proposed cuts in the House legislation could significantly reduce the amount a family receives. It could also change eligibility guidelines, thus cutting other families who now qualify. One on-line source claimed 210,000 low-income children could be cut from free school meals because their enrollment is tied to their family's SNAP participation. Close to 4 million people could lose SNAP benefits next year.

When families have food assistance, they are able to use monthly earnings or income for medical expenses, clothing, childcare, rent, home repairs. This economic activity benefits local businesses.

As we approach Thanksgiving Social Justice Committee asks people to consider those

among us who are hungry. We strongly encourage Meeting members and attenders to call or write our local representatives and tell them how you feel. A call takes less than a minute.

Congressman Reed (has in past voted against SNAP):

89 W. Market Street, Corning, NY
14830, (607) 654-7566

or

401 E. State St. Suite 304-1, Ithaca,
NY 14850, (607) 222-2027

Congressman Hanna (has in the past voted in favor of SNAP):

49 Court St. Suite 230, Binghamton,
NY 13901, (607) 723-0212

— Sue Ruff, Social Justice Committee

December in Ithaca Monthly Meeting History

A look back at our history through the minutes of our monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

15 Years Ago (December 14, 1998)

Kyri Murdough reported for the Power Quakers a request for permission to collect special contributions for their project, "Kits for Kosovo." Approved.

A letter was received from Oakwood Friends School stating they will be paying off their loan of \$25,000 from IMM on December 31, 1998. [This long-term loan with modest interest had been made by IMM roughly 20 years previously].

30 Years Ago (December 12, 1983)

Peace and Social Action reported on the Sanctuary Program [for Central American refugees]. They shared information about the program and proposed that IMM support the program. Meeting approved support for the program in principle and sending Katy Van Dusen as IMM representative to the Committee on Peace with Justice in Central America.

45 Years Ago (December 9, 1968)

Young Friends activities at this time included (1) a planned visit to Allenwood (PA) federal prison Dec. 20-21 (two adult members of IMM went to Allenwood to obtain approval for the visit), (2) looking into the

possibility of renting a house near campus for 8 to 10 people, (3) working with other organizations in Ithaca against the sale and use of violent toys, and (4) mimeographing and distributing a list of prisoners resisting the draft.

50 Years Ago (December 9, 1963)

Funds were sent to AFSC for relief efforts to Cuba and Haiti. The IMM Clothing Committee requested donations of blankets and women's clothing for needs of Algerian residents.

70 Years Ago (December 13, 1943)

Grace Foster reported that eight young men from the Big Flats Civilian Public Service camp attended the square dance party held on twelfth month fourth in Fernow Hall. Twenty-three in all were present for a very enjoyable evening. All eight boys attended Meeting the following day. Loren Petry led the boys on a hike around Fall Creek Gorge and Beebe Lake. [Historian's note: Joshua Cope, a recent past clerk of IMM at this time, was also very active for many years with Young Friends. Josh was a forester and professor in the Conservation Department (now Natural Resources). This is the likely explanation for a square dance in Fernow Hall at Cornell!]

— Tom Brown, Historian

The Meeting

An excerpt from the poem by John Greenleaf Whittier

[...]

"I ask no organ's soulless breath
To drone the themes of life and death,
No altar candle-lit by day,
No ornate wordsman's rhetoric-play,
No cool philosophy to teach
Its bland audacities of speech
To double-tasked idolaters
Themselves their gods and worshippers,
No pulpit hammered by the fist
Of loud-asserting dogmatist,
Who borrows for the Hand of love
the smoking thunderbolts of Jove.
I know how well the fathers taught,
What work the later schoolmen wrought;
I reverence old time faith and men,
But God is near us now as then;
His force of love is still unspent,
His hate of sin as imminent;
And still the measure of our needs,
Outgrows the cramping bounds of creeds;
Too little or too much we know
And sight is swift and faith is slow;
The power is lost to self-deceive
With shallow forms of make-believe.
We walk at high noon, and the bells
Call to a thousand oracles,
But the sound deafens, and the light
Is stronger than our dazzled sight;
The letters of the sacred Book
Glimmer and swim beneath our look;
Still struggles in the Age's breast
With deepening agony of quest
The old entreaty: 'Art thou He,
Or look we to the Christ to be?'

"God should be most where man is least:
So, where is neither church nor priest,
And never rag nor form of creed
To clothe the nakedness of need,--
Where farmer folk in silence meet,--
I turn my bell-unsummoned feet;
I lay the critic's glass aside,
I tread upon my lettered pride,
And, lowest-seated, testify
To the oneness of humanity;
Confess the universal want,
And share whatever Heaven may grant.

He findeth not who seeks his own,
The soul is lost that's saved alone."

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 – 1892) was an American Quaker poet and abolitionist.

Sustainability Panel

Laurence Clarkberg, director of our Friends Bike Clinic, will be showing a couple of his electric bikes at, "Ithaca 8 to 80* – Active Transportation For Everyone" on Thursday, December 5th at the Sustainability Center 111 N. Albany Street.

This will be an intergenerational dialogue about providing safe, accessible and enjoyable places in our community for 8 year-olds, 80 year-olds and everyone in between to walk, bike and be active as part of our daily routine. Laurence's bikes will be demonstrated at 6:30-7 and the interactive panel discussion will run from 7 to 8:30.

Talk to Laurence or visit sustainabilityctr.org for more info.

A Celebration of Carols: VOICES Annual Winter Concert

This concert in Cornell's beautiful Sage Chapel will feature several Friends, including Ellie Rosenberg, Kathleen Gale, Sue Wolf & Melody Johnson.

Enjoy the music on Saturday, December 7th, from 7-9p.

Do Quakers Celebrate Christmas?

Many people believe that Quakers do not celebrate holidays because we believe that *all days* are “holy days,” not just some days here and there on the calendar.

Indeed, some of the older issues of the *Book of Discipline* (an earlier form of what is now *Faith and Practice*) expounded on the topic. For example, the 1806 *Rules of Discipline* for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting declared that Friends should not join in “public fasts, feasts, and what they term holy days” because any good Quaker should know that “outward observations” have been supplanted by “the spiritual dispensation of the Gospel.”

However, most contemporary Quaker meetings seem to incorporate some sort of “pageant” or Christmas-inspired observance around the time of year. What gives?

Quakers and Christmas

excerpted from Martin Kelly's Blog: QuakerRanter.org

Friends traditionally have lumped Christmas in with all of the other ritualistic boo-ha that mainstream Christians practice. These are outward elements that should be abandoned now that we know Christ has come to teach the people himself and is present and available to all of us at all times. Outward baptism, communion, planned sermons, paid ministers, Christmas and Easter: all distractions from true Christian religion, from primitive Christianity revived.

One confusion that arises in liberal meetings this time of year is that it's assumed it's the Christian Friends who want the Christmas tree. Arguments sometime break out with “hyphenated” Friends who feel uncomfortable with the tree: folks who consider themselves Friends but also Pagan, Nontheistic, or Jewish and wonder why they're having Christianity forced on them.

But those of us who follow what we might call the “Christian tradition as understood by Friends” should be just as put out by a Christmas tree and party. We know that symbolic rituals like these spark disunity and distract us from the real purpose of our community: befriending Christ and listening for His guidance.

I was shocked and startled when I first learned that Quaker schools used to meet on Christmas day. My first response was “oh come on, that's taking it all too far.” But it kept bugging me and I kept trying to understand it. This was one of the pieces that helped me understand the Quaker way better and I finally grew to understand the rationale. If Friends were more consistent with more-or-less symbolic stuff like Christmas, it would be easier to teach Quakerism.

I don't mind Christmas trees, per se. And in my extended family Christmas has served as one of the mandatory times of year we all

According to New York Yearly Meeting, there is no Quaker taboo upon Christmas, as illustrated in NYYM's on-line FAQ:

What holidays do Friends celebrate?

Friends hold to the belief that each day is sacred. No holidays are particularly special, but we do generally celebrate Christmas, Easter, and other holidays with the rest of the wider society. Our testimony of simplicity lead most Friends to refrain from making too much of any one day, but there are no prohibitions to enjoying holidays.

The blog post, below, explores some of the issues Friends might like to consider as we approach the Christmas season.

— *Marin Clarkberg, newsletter editor*

have to show up together for dinner. It's never been very religious, so I never felt I needed to stop the practice when I became involved with Friends. But as a Friend I'm careful not to pretend that the consumerism and social rituals have much to do with Christ. Christmas trees are pretty. The lights make me feel good in the doldrums of mid-winter. That's reason enough to put one up.

Unprogrammed liberal Friends could use the tensions between traditional Quakerly stoicism and mainstream Christian nostalgia as a teaching moment, and we could use discomfort around the ritual of Christmas as a point of unity and dialog with Pagan, Jewish and Non-theistic Friends. Christian Friends are always having to explain how we're not the kind of Christians others assume we are (others both within and outside the Society). Being principled about Christmas is one way of showing that difference. People will surely say “oh come on,” but so what? A lot of spiritual seekers are critical of the kind of crazy commercial spending sprees that marked Christmas's past and I don't see why a group saying Christmas isn't about Christ would be at a particular disadvantage during this first Christmas season of the next Great Depression.

Whenever I post this kind of stuff on my blog I get comments how I'm being too Scrooge. Well I guess I am. Bah humbug. Honestly though, I've always liked Quaker Christmas parties. They're a way of mixing things up, a way of coming together as a community in a warmer way that we usually do. People stop confabbing about committee questions and actually enjoy one another's company. One time I asked my meeting to call it the Day the World Calls Christmas Party, which I thought was kind of clever (everyone else surely thought “there goes Martin again”). The joy of real community that is filled once a year at our Christmas parties might be symptom of a hunger to be a different kind of community every week, even every day.

Martin Kelly is a Quaker editor and blogger, as well as the Senior Editor of Friends Journal, the venerable monthly magazine of “Quaker Thought and Life Today.”

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, November 10, 2013

Clerk: Antonia Saxon
Assistant Clerk: Marilyn Ray
Recording Clerks: Nancy Gabriel, Marin Clarkberg & Susan Ruff
(*The @ signifies that the minute has been read and approved during Meeting. Please note that copies of all annual reports provided during this Meeting are on file with and available from the Clerk or Recording Clerk.*)

2013 11.01 Opening. Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on November 10, 2013. At 12:15 PM, 24 Friends gathered in open worship.

The Clerk reviewed the agenda and acknowledged Tom Ruscitti and Nancy Gabriel, who were holding the Meeting in the Light.

Clerk's Reading was from Listening Spirituality by Patricia Loring:

Do we find it more difficult to listen prayerfully one-on-one or in a group? Do we find it more difficult to listen in an open, humble, and respectful spirit to personal matters or to issues of business that challenge your own views? Are we able to retain our sense of love and unity with someone whose views diverge from or challenge your own? Are we able to give them credit for purity of motive? What seems to disrupt our sense of unity? -- to support it? Do we find ourselves impatient with those who fail to see our point of view... Impatient with waiting to come to unity... Impatient to get on with it?

Notice that the Meeting for Business is not only a particular instance of the Meeting for Worship but also a particular instance of seeking to be guided by God. Do we seek the will of God in all things? ... some things?... sometimes? What governs our desire? Is there a pattern in what's given over and what's withheld?

Does our Meeting have a commitment to carrying out the will of God as discerned communally, whatever it may be? Do we bear our part of the responsibility for discerning whether the minute in fact expresses the sense of the meeting...for participating in carrying it out?

2013 11.02 Report from Ministry and Worship

1. Regarding a sound system, we have consulted with McNeil's Music and we have purchased speakers. @
2. A Clearness Committee for Holly White, who is applying for membership, was recommended and approved: Marilyn Ray, Nancy Gabriel, Nancy Riffer, and Steve Mohlke. Friends were reminded that opportunities to serve on Clearness Committees should extend to all members, remembering that the person who seeks clearness has input on the committee membership. @

2013 11.03 The Ad Hoc Committee on Meeting House Usage

The Meetinghouse Use Fund Ad Hoc Committee Report [distributed at the meeting and subsequently with the Minutes on the

IMM listserv] was read and people were asked to review it in four areas.

Will we allow some not for profit groups to use the meetinghouse free of charge? Yes. @

Should we consider both this building and the Burt House? Meeting was informed that the Burt House does not charge and is open to groups to use.

The Meeting wishes to be more generous with our Meeting House space in line with our testimonies and our place in the community. The meetinghouse will be available for the work of the Meeting and to outside groups who will, if possible, contribute to the upkeep and maintenance through donations. We will accept donations consistent with each group's resources. Groups which use the building will be informed of the suggested current fee guidelines. Additional donations over the amount specified in those guidelines will be invited and in kind donations will be allowed. This will be implemented for a trial period of six months. @

The Meeting will hold a threshing session to discern our testimonies and to guide our priorities for use of the meetinghouse space in January 2014. @

We still have not solved the sponsor problem and the need continues.

The Meeting lays down the Meetinghouse Use Fund Ad Hoc Committee with deep gratitude. @

2013 11.04 Treasurer's Report. A printed report was made available to the meeting.

2013 11.05 Other Concerns

A concern was expressed for a neighborhood liaison or outreach committee to be formed in line with our testimonies. Several people present said they would be interested in serving on the committee. @

A concern was expressed to ask Social Justice Committee to publicize the issues about the loss of SNAP benefits. @

A concern was raised that the Scholarship funds were getting low. This is referred to the Finance Committee and donations are requested. @

Twenty-five Friends settled into worship at 2:43 PM before adjourning. Our next regular Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held at the rise of Meeting on December 8, 2013.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Ruff, Recording Clerk

December 2013 Calendar of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Spiritual Friendship Workshop

Sunday, December 1, 9a

Spiritual friendship is a practice of deep listening, of opening to the movement of Spirit, and of celebrating our journeys of faith. After considering how spiritual friendship overlaps with more familiar styles of companionship and how it may be practiced formally or informally, participants will be invited to practice both offering and receiving this unique style of listening. This workshop will be offered by Holly White and will wrap up by 10:15.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Sunday, December 8, Rise of Meeting

Join in the Quaker decision-making process. Agenda items should be sent to our clerk, Antonia Saxon, by the preceding Wednesday.

Peace Witness Committee

Saturday, December 14, ap

Join us at our Meeting's Burt House, 227 Willard Way (near Cornell and overlooking Ithaca Falls). All are welcome.

Christmas Celebration & Brunch

Sunday, December 15, 9a

Oh yes, we do have a "Christmas Pageant." It may not be rehearsed, but the beauty of this special telling of the story may bring you tears nonetheless. Looking for children... and costume elements. We need shepherds, animals, wisemen, and all the rest.

After the "rise of the pageant," we will feast. Please bring a dish to share, and linger for fine fellowship.

Holiday Singing

Sunday, December 15, 7p

Join Dick and Melody for their annual Holiday Sing. Bring nibbles and desserts and we'll sing and eat and eat and sing! Their

home is at 112 Mt Pleasant Rd. Ceili (Susan) Murphy will be playing piano and Rima will be on her violin. Other instruments are most welcome.

We'll be singing traditional carols, Hanukkah and Solstice songs as requested. If you have a favorite, familiar seasonal song we probably have music and words. If it's less familiar or new you might want to bring words, chords/sheet music. We'll be sure to do 'The Grinch, Turning Toward the Light; by Mustards Retreat, Christmas in the Trenches and Winter Wonderland. Come one and all and celebrate the Season!

Christmas Eve Meeting for Worship

Tuesday, December 24, 7p

Join in this special Meeting for Worship at our Meeting's Burt House, 227 Willard Way (near Cornell and overlooking Ithaca Falls).

Christmas Eve Open House

Tuesday, December 24, 6-11p

Friends are invited to join us for some Christmas Eve cheer at Toni Murdough's and Kirsten Marshall's annual open house at their home, 520 North Tioga Street. Drop in anytime between 6 and 11pm, they would love to see you. Questions? 273-9037.

Newsletter submissions due

Thursday, January 2, 5p

Please provide your newsletter contributions to Marin Clarkberg: 150 Giles St., 14850, 607-279-4722, clarkberg@cornell.edu.

Every Sunday

- 9:30a **Coffee and fellowship** in the library of the Third Street Meetinghouse; entering silence by 10:15.
- 10:30a **Meeting for Worship** for all ages at the Third Street Meetinghouse
- 10:45a **First Day School:** attenders exit the meetingroom.

Other Weekly IMM Events

- Wed 5:30-6:30p **Meeting for worship** at the Third Street Meetinghouse
- Wed 7:30p **Midweek meeting** for worship at the Burt House (227 N. Willard Way)
- Thurs 5-5:30p **Peace Vigil** at the bottom of East State Street near the Community School for Music and Arts