



Newsletter of the
Ithaca Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

September 2008

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Website: ithacamonthlymeeting.org

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS
Due September 24th**

Materials for October's newsletter may be submitted by the method of your choice to:
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150 Giles St., Ithaca, NY 14850
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Health and Community

— *Steve Mohlke*

Personal health and Quaker Community, two topics that regularly command my attention, converged in a book I recently read.

Though I have been living with diabetes for 12 years, I no longer feel sick. At the time of my diagnosis, my body responded more poorly to common colds than the bodies of people around me who seemed to have the same colds. I've adopted good habits of exercise, diet, sleep, meditation and medication. My diabetes is a permanent condition but it is under control. I still occasionally get sick, but it happens much less frequently and my body deals with the sickness much more quickly and with less disruption to my life than before. It is unlikely that I would have given this much attention to health in my life if it were not for my diabetes.

My experiences in Quaker Community, both lousy and wonderful, have often defied my understanding. Peter Steinke's, "Healthy Congregations," helped me understand community health by building upon my understanding of personal health. I now have a better idea of habits I can practice to help build healthy community.

Steinke offers us tools for understanding the health of a congregation. He points out that "A healthy congregation is one that actively and responsibly addresses or heals disturbance, not one with an absence of troubles." He begins by describing how parts interact to form a whole both in terms of members forming a congregation and cells forming an organ-

ism. He compares the characteristics of health of a congregation to the health of an organism. "Similarities exist between viral infections and relational conflict. A host cell (person/group) tolerates the virus's invasive behavior." We are all being exposed to viruses regularly yet most do not present a problem. "Outside a living cell, a virus is incapable of multiplying." But when a virus manages to invade and use the host cell's resources to multiply itself, the disease process has begun.

After numerous biblical references to "murmuring," he suggests that "anxiety" is a better word than "murmuring" and then states "Similar to a virus, anxiety needs a host cell to replicate itself." He describes secrets, accusations, lies and triangulation as four particular anxiety viruses that affect congregations. While these descriptions are valuable, "Actually the identity of the



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particular virus is secondary. What is primary is whether or not the viruses are encouraged... If you initiate the murmuring or enable it, you contribute to the destructive side. The antidote to both kinds of reactive behaviors is self-control."

The section on Health Resources offers chapters on "The Higher Medicines" and "The Immune Congregation." For example, in the higher medicine of "Reaction versus Response," he states "... But relationships occur within the context of emotional processes. Under certain circumstances, people react. Forces of emotionality disrupt reasoning, valuing and decision making. Passion interferes with judgment. The 'cool head' gives way to anxiety. Uncontrolled or misguided emotion bolts into reactive behaviors, some of which are startling or disgusting... under duress the thinking brain gives way to the lower, more automatic [parts of the] brain... Unless people respond instead of react, health will be limited."

As one might expect by now, the chapter on "The Immune Congregation" compares the immune system of a congregation to that of an organism. We face the challenge of determining what is a virus and what is not. To be healthy we need to effectively deal with harmful invaders, but this can be taken too far. My own diabetes is a result of my immune system mistaking my insulin-producing cells as foreign.

This book has helped me understand my role in the health of Ithaca Monthly Meeting and my part in the immune system. I feel like many of us could benefit from some shared discussion around these concepts. I intend to facilitate a discussion series of approximately three sessions on this book in October and/or November. I will place an order for copies of the book on Sept 15. Please contact me by then if you would like me to order you a copy. The cost is \$20 new or you can find used copies online.

Meeting Events

Peace Witness Committee Meeting Tuesday, September 9th, 7:30p

All are invited to come and share in the effort to bring the Quaker Peace Testimony to life in this community. Please join us at the Burt House.

Meeting for Healing Tuesday, September 23rd, 7:15p

A Meeting for Healing is held at 7:15 on the fourth Tuesday of every month at Melody Johnson and Dick Crepeau's house (112 Mount Pleasant Road). If you have a concern but cannot attend, let Melody know and you will be held in the Light. For directions or more information, call Melody, 272-8755.

Social Justice Committee Meeting Thursday, September 25th, 6p

Social Justice will gather at the Burt House from 6 to 7:15. Please join us.

The IMM Annual Picnic Sunday, September 28th, after the Rise of Meeting

Our Annual End-of-Summer Picnic will be Sunday, September 28 at Taughannock State Park from the rise of Meeting until 3:30 pm. Bring a dish-to-pass, table service (extras will be available), and a favorite outside game. Program Committee will provide grilled hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, and all the fixings.

Make sure to pick up a "Quaker picnic parking pass" at Meeting to give to the attendant at the park gate. Friends are encouraged to carpool from Hector Meeting House or to use your Empire Passport if you already have one. We will be in the Central Pavilion. When you enter the Park drive straight towards the Lake and the Central Pavilion is on the left side of the marina.

Words to Consider

from Meeting for Healing

Reading Aloud to My Father

*I chose the book haphazard
from the shelf, but with Nabokov's
first sentence I knew it wasn't the thing
to read to a dying man:*

*"the cradle rocks above an abyss," it began,
"and common sense tells us that our existence
is but a brief crack of light
between two eternities of darkness."*

*The words disturbed both of us immediately,
and I stopped. With music it was the same—
Chopin's piano concerto—he asked me
to turn it off. He ceased eating, and drank
little, while the tumors briskly appropriated
what was left of him.*

*But to return to the cradle rocking, I think
Nabokov had it wrong. This is the abyss.
That's why babies howl at birth,
and why the dying so often reach
for something only they can apprehend.*

*At the end they don't want their hands
to be under the covers, and if you should put
your hand on theirs in a tentative gesture
of solidarity, they'll pull the hand free;
and you must honor that desire
and let them pull it free.*

—Jane Kenyon

Quaker ABCs

The following is adapted from *Quaker Jargon Busters* at easyweb.easynet.co.uk/pdaniels/qjargon.html which in turn draws heavily from a leaflet produced by Ealing Quaker Meeting's Communication and Outreach Group.

Attender. A person who worships regularly with Friends but has not officially joined a Meeting.

Birthright Friend. Time was that a person who was born to a Quaker family automatically became a member of the Society by right of birth. This is no longer true, but the term is used loosely to describe any Friend born of Quaker parents.

Business Meeting. Also known as *Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business* (MfWwAtB). A decision-making body guided by "Quaker Process."

Clerk. A person appointed by a business meeting or committee to take a meeting through its business and write the minutes. See also "Convener."

Concern. An idea or prompting by the Spirit which leads a Friend to take on an issue as a personal crusade. A Friend may bring their concern to their Business Meeting to be tested, that is to see if it is a true concern or simply a "notion."

Convener. Usually applied to a person who is responsible for the organization or scheduling of a one-off meeting.

Convinced Friend. One who has become convinced of the truth of the Quaker way; anybody who joins the Society of Friends.

Daffodil ministry. Every spring a Friend notices how lovely the daffodils look as they come to meeting for worship, and they minister about how lovely the world is. (Generally a pejorative term to describe uncritical and predictable ministry.)

Elder. As a noun: a member of a meeting charged with responsibility for the ordering of the spiritual life of that meeting. As a verb: the process of gentle redirection of a person back onto the path of right ordering.

Epistle. Quaker gatherings sometimes send a report of their happenings or deliberations to other Quakers.

Faith and Practice. One of many editions of a book which seeks to express in words the workings of the Spirit as experienced by Quakers. It is both an anthology of Quaker thought and guidance on the right ordering of Quaker affairs. Different yearly meetings use and/or produce their own versions of this text. Further, it is regularly revised to reflect the continuing revelation and understanding of the Spirit. Historically, it is also known as the Book of Discipline.

Leading. A prompting thought to be received from the Spirit. It can turn into a concern!

Meeting for Worship. The great mystery of Quakerism: what happens in meeting for worship? We don't actually worship using a liturgy, agreed words or ritual in the way that other traditions do. Quakers believe that when we gather together in silence we can engage in a direct and personal relationship with God. (But we disagree on the nature of God!)

Membership. What you apply for when you decide to want to join Friends. Contrast with "Attender."

Message. What a person gives when they stand up and speak during meeting for worship. A message is delivered from the Spirit.

Minutes. These are the record of the proceedings of a business meeting written by the clerk, recording clerk, or convener of that meeting. Quaker minutes are written and agreed as the meeting proceeds with its business.

Monthly Meeting. A group that gathers as a decision-making body on a monthly basis. Monthly Meetings are grouped into "regions" or "quarters" that meet four times a year, and into "yearly meetings" that gather, well, yearly.

Notion. 1) Any approach to religious matters not based on first-hand spiritual experience. 2) A leading that didn't turn into a concern, someone else's concern that isn't important to you, or any religious and spiritual practice that you don't feel is relevant. (Quakers often try not to be judgemental, but deciding when something is a "notion" is one time when they do. A derisive term.)

Occur. As in "This Friend's name would not have occurred to me." a Friendly (or devious) way of damning a suggestion.

Plain speech. This is how Quakers aspire to speak ("Let you Yea be your Yea"); also refers to the use of "thee" and "thou" in place of "you."

Popcorn meeting. There are days when everybody seems to have something to say at meeting for worship. There is little or no silence. People keep popping up, bursting into ministry.

Programmed Meeting. A Meeting that is led by a pastor.

Quaker Process. A process by which Friends arrive at decisions in Business Meeting. Described at some length in *Faith and Practice*, elements include: beginning with centering worship; waiting for recognition from the clerk before speaking; speaking from the spirit; allowing silence between messages; listening with an open heart; speaking only once to a given issue; and deferring a decision if there is not clearness.

Right ordering. Done in the correct manner, in keeping with Quaker tradition and practice.

Testimonies. Aspects of our witness on which most Friends can actually agree! Sometimes Friends refer to the SPICE testimonies: simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality.

Unprogrammed Meeting. A Meeting for Worship without a pastor where ministry and prayer is extemporaneous, inspired by the Spirit rather than by a predetermined order of service.

Weighty Friend. One who is influential (i.e: their opinion carries weight) within the Society (while remaining consistent with our testimony on equality, of course).

Meeting Friends



From top down: Lynn, Kris, and Rosie Altucher have been attending Ithaca Monthly Meeting since the mid-1990s. Before moving to Ithaca in 1993, Kris and Lynn occasionally attended Multonomah Monthly Meeting in Portland, Oregon. The whole family currently serves on Hospitality Committee. Kris has previously served on Program Committee, and Lynn has served on CALM. (Sparky remains locked up in a cage during Meeting.)

Tonia & Sarah on the Move

Tonia Saxon, Sarah Saxon and John Levine have set off for the UK. Tonia's email address remains the same <tonia@iecc.com>; their address in Cambridge is:

88 St. Matthew's Gardens
Cambridge, UK
CB1 2PT

(from the US) 011-44-1223-329280 (note: + 5 hours)
(from inside the UK) 01223-329280

Tonia writes, "Don't be fooled by the poetic-sounding address, the apartment overlooks Walmart (Asda, there) and a sea of other big-box stores."

September 2008 Calendar

Every Sunday

- 10:00a Singing in the Hector Meeting House
- 10:30a **Meeting for Worship** for all ages
- 10:45a Children are welcome to enjoy the outside.

Other Weekly IMM Events

- Tues 9-9:20p **Worship** in your own home.
- Wed 7:30p **Midweek meeting** for worship at the Burt House.
- Thurs 4:30-5:30 **Peace Vigil** at the bottom of East State Street near the Community School for Music and Arts.

Monthly Events of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Second Sunday (September 14)

Rise of Mtg **Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.**
Agenda items should be provided to Tom Brown, Clerk, before September 10th.

Fourth Sunday (September 28)

Rise of Mtg This month, our **brunch** event is superceded by the annual picnic. Please see "Meeting Events" on page 2.

September Events (*For more information about asterisked items, see inside.)

September 3, Wednesday

1:15-3:00p Volunteers needed at **Kitchen Cupboard**. Call Ginny Gartlein for information (272-2471). Kitchen Cupboard regularly needs brown paper bags.

September 9, Tuesday

7:30p **Peace Witness** Committee at the Burt House.*

September 21, Sunday

9:15ish **Children and the Life of the Meeting** (CALM) may meet. Confirm with Marilyn Ray.

September 23, Tuesday

7:15p **Meeting for Healing**, 112 Mt. Pleasant Road.*

September 25, Thursday

6-7:15p **Social Justice** Committee at the Burt House.*

September 28, Sunday

***September 28th** is our last Meeting for Worship at the Hector Meetinghouse for the season and the date of our annual picnic.*

October 5, Sunday

Meeting for Worship at Anabel Taylor commences at 11am. Watch for announcements regarding the First Day School Welcoming event.

Don't forget: we return to Anabel Taylor on Sunday October 5th at 11am!