



Newsletter of the

Ithaca Monthly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

December 2011

IMM CONTACTS

Meetinghouse:

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Clerk:

Steve Mohlke
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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 body of the message as simply:

join

Scheduling:

To set up or schedule a program or presentation for the meeting and/or to reserve a room at the meeting-house, please see the instructions on the website.

Website: ithacamonthlymeeting.org

Preparing Ourselves for Meeting for Worship

Friends sometimes speak of “gathered” or “covered” Meetings for Worship: meetings that feel especially deep and spirit-filled. As *Faith and Practice* describes it, in a gathered meeting “individual separateness recedes and we become more of a community under divine guidance.”

Sometimes my own experience of meeting for worship falls far short of this goal. For whatever reason, I have trouble “centering down.”

What steps can we take as individuals and as a community to help one another settle into meeting for worship?

Come with heart and mind prepared

Preparing ourselves during the week through contemplation, reading, and other reflective practices can be helpful. Many recommend that Friends engage in a daily spiritual practice, such as meditation or prayer. By nurturing a spiritual thread that runs throughout the week, it can be easier to connect to the source during our short time together on Sunday.

In our discussion in the Ministry and Worship committee, we have also consider the following concrete steps for enhancing the experience of Meeting for Worship—our own as well as that of others.

Consider coming early

Consider arranging your Sunday morning routine so that you can arrive at the meetinghouse well before 10:30. If you are not already prepared internally for expectant waiting when you first arrive at the meetinghouse, you may find that time before Meeting for Worship provides some opportunity for this.

The meetinghouse is opened by 9:15 each Sunday morning, and coffee is prepared by 9:30. The gathering of Friends in the library is casual, with no particular agenda. This can be a wonderful time and space to learn a little about another Friend.

Friends begin settling the meetingroom by 10:15 each Sunday, if not earlier still. Coffee service will be cleared at 10:15, and we ask Friends to transition from fellowship to an atmosphere more conducive to silent worship at this time.

Consider where you sit

I attended a lecture recently where the lecture hall filled up at the back while many rows toward the front remained empty. I

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From “A Tender Visitation”

When you come to your meetings... what do you do? Do you then gather together bodily only, and kindle a fire, compassing yourselves about with the sparks of your own kindling, and so please yourselves, and walk in the “Light of your own fire and the sparks which you have kindled”?

Or rather, do you sit down in True Silence, resting from your own Will and Workings, and waiting upon the Lord, fixed with your minds in that Light wherewith Christ has enlightened you, until the Lord breathes life in you, refresheth you, and prepares you ... that you may offer unto him a pure and spiritual sacrifice?

— William Penn

see this in classrooms, movie theaters, and—yes—Meeting for Worship. Why are we so drawn to retiring into the background? Is there something we fear?

There are, of course, very good reasons to choose not to sit in the middle of our meetingroom. For example, if you suspect you may have to get up in the middle of Meeting for Worship, it would make sense to sit near the door. Or perhaps you have a disability that makes it hard to navigate to some chairs.

I am reminded of the concept of "witness" or Gandhi's advice to "be the change we want to see in the world." If we wish to be a centered spiritual community, holding one another in loving support, let us find the strength to fill in those middle seats!

Minimize disruptions

If Quakers weren't tolerant of people coming and going—and babies crying and Friends sneezing—during our 60 minutes of Meeting for Worship, I doubt very much I would've ever found my way into this community. Indeed, not only do Friends *tolerate* such distractions, but frequently those same "distractions" become incorporated into profound spiritual messages. It's beautiful!

Noise Abatement and Hearing Issues in the Meetingroom

Over the past several months, the Third Street Meeting Committee (TSMC) has been dealing with both noise abatement and hearing issues in the meeting room.

With the installation of Interface carpet on the second floor in October and Tectum ceiling tiles in November, it is our hope that the noise from upstairs during meeting for worship and the din we hear at the rise of meeting will be significantly reduced. We realize, however, that noise abatement will not fully address the issues of people who have some hearing loss. As one member commented recently, "Neither carpet nor acoustic tiles compensate for people who don't speak up, don't speak clearly, or speak too rapidly. Without proper use of amplification and without a conscious effort to mitigate poor speaking habits, the issues simply continue."

TSMC could consider ordering amplification devices similar to those handed out in theatres or an amplification system for people who have difficulty hearing, but it would probably be better and certainly more "cost effective" if those who speak softly would consciously speak louder and more clearly, and those who speak very rapidly would make an effort to slow down.

As the above member has said, "It's not only whether we spend funds for amplification - it's also that the Meeting needs to make the effort to include everyone. We do this now by preparing vegetarian and vegan foods, by our trial scent-reduced policy, and by efforts to make the meetinghouse mobility-accessible." She feels strongly that we need to address inclusion around hearing issues as well.

What does the Meeting think?

I do not wish to suggest that we become less accepting of one another's imperfections, but I would ask Friends to consider how they might minimize the impact of their own—inevitable!—disruptions. For example:

- **Try to not to arrive late for Meeting for Worship.** The first 15 minutes can feel very unsettled when there is a constant stream of Friends trickling into the meetingroom.
- **Try not to walk around the meetingroom when a Friend is speaking.** Words of the spirit are so precious, we should give them our full attention whenever possible.
- **Leave the door between the meetingroom and the library open.** Consider the library to be a part of our worship space from 10:30-11:30. We ask Friends to shut the doors between the library and the kitchen, and between the library and the entry hall. By leaving the door between the meetingroom and the library open, we reduce the exposure of those in the meeting room to the sounds of doors opening and shutting.

Friends, I hope that you have read these thoughts in the spirit that they were intended: not as admonitions or a list of rules, but as issues to consider in thinking about how we may contribute to nurturing our spiritual community.

—Marin Clarkberg

What Environmentally-Friendly Looks Like

The Third Street Meetinghouse Committee is finally wrapping up "Phase II" projects: exterior painting, interior painting, upstairs carpeting and flooring, installing the meetingroom ceiling tiles and putting in a fence around our parking lot. It's been quite an odyssey learning about different materials and finding contractors to do the work. One aspect that has complicated matters is that we are dedicated to finding materials that are environmentally friendly. We used Marmoleum rather than vinyl tiles upstairs. We bought our carpet from interface-global.com, a company that has inspired the carpet industry towards sustainability. We are fortunate to have among us several people with much environmental knowledge. Our meetinghouse might not seem much different than other buildings on the surface, but our construction choices are the result of their expertise.

Which brings up a sore point for me: in many ways our building looks worse than other less environmentally sound buildings. For example we've discovered that the environmentally-friendly finish for our wood floors stains easily and does not stand up well to abuse. We discovered that the no-VOC paint we used for the interior takes many coats to cover the trim without streaks. The perfectionist in me wants the floor to be unmarred and the trim to be shiny smooth. But more and more I'm coming to realize that it is not the environmental products that need to change, but my expectations. The poisons in our products have over the years given us unrealistic expectations about how clear and clean and smooth things should be.

Here's an example: for many years I resisted buying compact fluorescent light bulbs (shameful I know!). I didn't like the color of the light they produced and I didn't like the momentary pause for them to come on. Over time I've gotten used to these bulbs. Now that the majority of bulbs in my house are compact fluorescent, I no longer like the color of incandescent bulbs—my expectations about what looks good have changed.

—Larry Clarkberg

November in Ithaca Monthly Meeting History

Ithaca Monthly Meeting has a rich history that now exceeds 80 years. Our meeting historian, Tom Brown, has obtained, digitized, and summarized the minutes of past business meetings.

10 Years Ago (Dec. 9, 2001)

Elizabeth Schneider was welcomed into IMM upon transfer of her membership from Staten Island Monthly Meeting.

15 Years Ago (Dec. 9, 1996)

Ministry & Oversight's recommendation for the marriage of Antonia Saxon and John Levine under the care of IMM was warmly approved. [Tonia and John were married at the Burt House December 31.]

20 Years Ago (Dec. 9, 1991)

"Esperanza," the Salvadoran refugee who had lived in Sanctuary locally under care of IMM and the Ithaca Area Sanctuary Committee, returned to the New York City area as a legal resident of the U.S.

40 Years Ago (Dec. 10, 1961)

IMM decided to support a program in Dacca, Pakistan, sponsored by AFSC and run largely by the British Friends Service Committee, aimed at improving the educational level of children of an impoverished class called the Basti. The sum of \$10 per month for one year was pledged.

70 Years Ago (Dec. 9, 1941)

A concern was raised that all should clarify their thinking and that Meeting should review its position in regard to peace, now that the U.S. is at war [declared by the U.S. against Japan just the previous day]. A committee of Joshua Cope, Harold Speight, and Ned Burtt was appointed to serve as an advisory committee for Young Friends concerning problems facing them.

Ned Burtt and Mildred, his first wife, were accepted into membership of IMM.

Fall by Thea Clarkberg

Fire leaf
dances with a million others

Rakes
comb the wild fray

Chilly air
burns as I breathe in

The hearth
fills with flame once again

Winter clothing
is brought from dusty closets, and

Night
seeps into day

Fall...
is here

What Are You Reading?

Have you read a book lately that fostered your spiritual growth and that you would like to share with us? The IMM newsletter would welcome a description and short excerpt from the book and information about where it can be obtained. Please send submissions to Lynn Truame at thetruames@gmail.com.

A Friend writes:

I recently finished reading *A Testament of Devotion* by Thomas Kelly. Thomas Kelly (1893-1941) was a lifelong Quaker and, among other things, a professor of philosophy at Earlham and Haverford Colleges. *A Testament of Devotion* was published posthumously and is a collection of Kelly's short essays and lectures written between 1938 and his death. Kelly's emphasis on the need for congruity between our interior and exterior worlds, or the Eternal and the temporal, spoke to me strongly. Here is a passage that I found particularly helpful:

But the light fades, the will weakens, the hum-drum returns. Can we stay this fading? No, nor should we try, for we must learn the disciplines of His will, and pass beyond this first lesson of His Grace. But the Eternal Inward Light does not die when ecstasy dies, nor exist only intermittently, with the flickering of our psychic states. Continuously renewed immediacy, not receding memory of the Divine Touch, lies at the base of religious living. Let us explore together the secret of a deeper devotion, a more subterranean sanctuary of the soul, where the Light Within never fades, but burns, a perpetual Flame, where the wells of living water of divine revelation rise up continuously, day by day and hour by hour, steady and transfiguring. These "bright shoots of everlastingness" can become a steady light within, if we are deadly in earnest in our dedication to the Light, and are willing to pass out of the first stages into mature religious living. Only if this is possible can the light from the inner sanctuary of the soul be a workaday light for the marketplace, a guide for perplexed feet, a recreator of culture-patterns for the race of men.

What is here urged are internal practices and habits of the mind. What is here urged are secret habits of unceasing orientation of the deeps of our being about the Inward Light, ways of conducting our inward life so that we are perpetually bowed in worship, while we are also very busy in the world of daily affairs. What is urged here are inward practices of the mind at deepest levels, letting it swing like the needle, to the polestar of the soul. And like the needle, the Inward Light becomes the truest guide of our life, showing us new and unsuspected defects in ourselves and our fellows, showing us new and unsuspected possibilities in the power and life of goodwill among men. But, more deeply, He who is within us urges, by secret persuasion, to such an amazing Inward Life with Him, so that, firmly cleaving to Him, we always look out upon all the world through the sheen of the Inward Light, and react toward men spontaneously and joyously from this Inward Center.

Worship Sharing at Tampa Monthly Meeting

Tampa Monthly Meeting has been sharing materials they have used for a worship sharing group on a Quaker listserv. I thought Friends in Ithaca might enjoy reading one of their contributions.

— *Marin Clarkberg*

This week's reflections and queries are provided by Jan Dahm & Lisa Erazmus. Worship Sharing is a modified form of the Meeting for Worship, with a set topic for prayerful consideration, where all participants are encouraged to share their own inner responses to the topic at hand.

— *Steve Kinney, Tampa Monthly Meeting*

Family

"A Quaker family, whatever its configuration, is rooted in the wider community of Friends. Grounded in love, it seeks to nurture every member through full acceptance, respect for each other's choices, and common experiences characterized by caring, compassion, open and supportive communication, understanding, and a sense of humor. We believe that through the family we learn that the source of human love is God's love for us. The foundation of spiritual life is laid in the family. As members of the family foster their own spiritual growth, children come to sense the presence of God. This foundation gives them an assurance and security that helps them order their relationships with God, with others, with nature, and with themselves."

— *Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting*

"Quakers brought a new vision of family and social life to America—one that contrasted sharply with the harsh, formal world of the New England Puritans. The Quakers stressed affection, friendship and hospitality, equality of women, and the value of self-disciplined, non-coercive childrearing."

— *Barry Levy*

"They spoke of the Society of Friends itself as their 'family.' George Fox characterized a Quaker meeting as 'a Family of God' and a 'household of faith.' Meeting both in England and America routinely addressed each other as 'brethren of one family.' These were more than mere metaphors. Quakers considered all Friends as their 'near relations' and welcomed them to hearth and home."

— *David Hackett Fischer*

1. What Quaker beliefs – such as seeing that of God in every person, or testimonies – such as simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship, guide how we live our lives within our Quaker families? Within the larger Quaker family?
2. How do Quaker practices such as being mindful and holding in the Light help to strengthen Quaker families? The larger Quaker family?
3. How have we experienced Quakerdom as a whole as family? Do we consider other Quakers – even those of other traditions (ie. programmed) as part of our "Family of God" or "household of faith?"

Earthcare Committee: The Time to Comment on Gas Drilling is Now

There are three DEC documents that relate to unconventional gas drilling (that is is, "fracking") for which the NYS DEC is currently accepting comments. The deadline for submitting comments has been extended to January 11, 2012. Comments to the DEC should focus on these documents in particular. More general comments should go to your political representatives in Albany (Governor Cuomo, plus your state Senator and Assemblyperson), or to DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens.

1. Revised Draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (rdSGEIS). The SGEIS is a set of guidelines for issuing permits to drill: it does not contain regulations, which is why the SGEIS includes so many suggestions. Because it is "generic," drilling permits will be issued without a site-specific EIS. You can read the rdSGEIS at www.dec.ny.gov/energy/75370.html
The DEC asks that comments refer to changes in the revised version issued this past summer. However many people have noted that significant gaps, incorrect information or other problems with the 2009 version have been carried over to the 2011 revision. So it is certainly appropriate to note uncorrected problems.
2. Regulations. NYS has had minimal regulations regarding gas drilling of any type. But the DEC did issue draft revised regulations this fall, including new sections on unconventional drilling. Some of the changes clearly give greater flexibility to the gas companies and leave much to the discretion of regional DEC staff. You can read the draft revisions at www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/77353.html
The final section, Part 560, is specific to "high volume slick water hydrofracturing" (HVHF) and includes many key provisions. Parts 552- 556 also contain important changes.
3. Stormwater Discharges from HVHF Operations (SPDES). This is a proposed general permit to authorize "point source" discharges to minimize both sediment runoff and chemical pollution. You can read the proposed revisions at www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/hvhfsgfactsht.pdf

The DEC asks that you: "Please be clear and specific when providing comments. Use facts, examples and scientific or engineering principles as appropriate. If possible, reference specific page numbers of the document. Please base your comments on your own reading of the documents, or the parts that interest you. Summaries which you read on the Internet or in newspapers may not be complete or accurate, and some on-line articles may be out-of-date."

Written comments will be accepted through 5pm on January 11, 2012 either on-line, or by regular mail. The website is www.dec.ny.gov/energy/76838.html. Paper submissions go to: dS-GEIS Comments; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-6510.

Please contact me if you need help submitting your comments.

— *Margaret McCasland*

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, November 13, 2011

2011-11.01 Gathering. Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Worship with Attention to Business on November 13, 2011. At 12:15 PM, 19 Friends settled into open worship. Clerk reviewed the agenda of the day's business, and noted that Carolyn Kenyon would be holding the Meeting in the Light. Clerk read from the Journal of Oliver Samson (1676) describing a time when Ireland Half-Yearly Meeting delayed the start of business proceedings for two days because of the continuous stream of praises and messages arising out of the opening open worship. He then told a related story about a recent gathering of Quakers in Kansas. After some further open worship, we turned our attention to the day's business.

2011-11.02 Social Justice. Sue Ruff gave the report for Social Justice.

A. The Social Justice Committee has made the following distribution of the funds in its 2011 discretionary budget line:

\$75 for the November dinner of the 35 children and youth who participate in the Paul Schreurs Memorial Program, sponsored by the Youth Bureau. Support for this endeavor grew out of the Community Build/Martin Luther King book group. The Schreurs program provides academic, personal, and financial support to young people who face obstacles to achieving their educational goals. Several people from Meeting will be preparing this dinner and funds will help defray expenses.

\$25 for stamped envelopes to be delivered to OAR to assist prisoners at the jail.

\$50 to the Fistula Foundation, 1900 The Alameda, Suite 500 San Jose, CA 95126-1427 (Committee members feel called upon to continue to support the efforts of this organization in its work to help injured and traumatized women in areas of the world that do not have adequate medical help.)

\$50 to the Alternatives to Violence Project, for the work being done in Rwanda.

\$300 to the Elves Project. This project matches children in need with donors from the community who purchase an entire outfit, a book, and a toy for Christmas.

Friends received the Report @

B. The Social Justice Committee proposed putting out the basket for the next two First Days to solicit additional funds for the Elves Project.

Friends APPROVED the proposal and will note that this use of the basket was approved at Monthly Meeting. @

2011-11.03 Nominating Committee.

A. Nancy Gabriel read the background information and proposal to create two committees out of the current Hospitality Committee. The discussion clarified what rises to the level of a Committee and what does not. Friends APPROVED the following Minute:

Hospitality Committee in its present form will be laid down and in its place there will be two new committees. Greeters and [food-related: name to be decided]. These two committees will compose their charges to be presented to Monthly Meeting for approval as soon as they are clear. @

B. Nancy Gabriel presented the first draft of Committee Nominations for 2012. She requested responses be given to members of the Committee. Friends received the first draft of nominations for next year. @

2011-11.04 Naming Committee. On behalf of the Naming Committee, Tonia Saxon, assistant clerk, recommended Blair Jennings to serve a three year term on the Nominating Committee commencing in 2012. APPROVED @

2011-11.05 Finance Committee

A. Dick Crepeau reported for the Finance Committee and reviewed the criteria the Committee used in developing the draft of the proposed budget for 2012. The final draft of the 2012 Budget will be presented at the December Monthly Meeting. Friends received the draft report. @

B. A suggestion was made that since both the Burt House and the Third Street Meetinghouse are tax exempt Trustees consider making donations in lieu of taxes to the City of Ithaca for public services. APPROVED @

2011-11.06 Treasurer's Report. Mike Simkin, treasurer, reported that by the end of the year we are looking at reducing the total of outstanding meetinghouse loans (line 19) by approximately half. As pledges continue to come in, the negative balance seen in the Third Street Meetinghouse funds (line 55) will be adjusted.

Friends received the report. @

2011-11.07 Other Concerns

A. A concern was raised about having a day(s) of discernment to consider our relationship to our properties.

Friends recognize the many dimensions of the following question: What are the spiritual roles our properties play in the life of the Meeting as a whole? Friends decided that a brief article would be placed in the Newsletter on the dimensions of this concern. Tonia Saxon, assistant Clerk, volunteered to write the article. Friends decided that there will be time set aside on a Monthly Meeting agenda to decide if Meeting is ready for discernment on this issue. APPROVED @

B. Praises were offered for the manner in which we conduct discussions about finances and other matters. APPROVED @

At 2.50PM, 16 Friends settled into worship before adjourning the Meeting. Friends intend to gather again for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business after the rise of Meeting on December 11, 2011.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilyn Ray, Co-Recording Clerk

Advices & Queries from NYYM Faith & Practice

Advice 8. Friends are earnestly advised to refrain from practices that are detrimental to the body or the mind, for example, the use of intoxicants and tobacco, and the misuse of drugs.

Query 5. Do we keep to moderation and simplicity in our daily lives? Have we allowed the acquisition of possessions to interfere with God's purpose for us? Are our homes places where the presence of God is felt by those who live there and those who visit there? Do we choose such recreations as are wholesome and consistent with Christian character? Are we careful in our choice of ways to use our time and energy?

December 2011 Calendar of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Coffee (and Tea) Hour

Sundays, 9:30-10:15a

Please join us for this opportunity to talk with Friends or otherwise prepare yourself for Meeting for Worship.

Power Quakers Painting

Saturday, December 10th

Painting continues! The teen group paints their classroom. Sunday, December 11th would be a good time for Friends to check out the progress upstairs.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Sunday, December 11, 12p

Agenda items should get to our clerk, Steve Mohlke, on or before the preceding Wednesday.

Holiday/Solstice Sing

Friday, December 16th, 7p

Join Melody and Dick at 112 Mt. Pleasant Road. Bring snacks to share if you like. If you have songs you'd like to share, bring some copies and the chords! Susan Murphy will be providing piano accompaniment.

Every Sunday

- 9:30a **Coffee and fellowship** in the library of the Third Street Meetinghouse
- 10:30a **Meeting for Worship** for all ages at the Third Street Meetinghouse
- 10:45a Friends participating in First Day School exit the meetingroom. Please be mindful of footfalls while upstairs, and consider removing your shoes..

Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 18th, 11:15a

The First Day School will once again perform an enactment relating to the Christmas story, but for the first time this will be in our new meetinghouse. Will it be the traditional tale? Or something else? Come and find out!

Holiday Luncheon

Sunday, December 18th, Rise of Meeting

Bring a dish to share to this wonderful annual gathering. The buffet meal will begin at the rise of meeting.

Newsletter submissions due

Friday, December 30th, 5p

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

New Years Eve Observance

Saturday, December 31st, 6p

Let us pass the last hours of 2011 together. We will gather at 6pm for a dish-to-pass supper, and then move on to family-friendly movies and games. If we can stay up to midnight, we'll toast the new year with sparkling grape juice! Bring your sleeping bag if you like, and we'll greet the new year together over breakfast. Questions or ideas about this event? Contact Marin at clarkberg@cornell.edu.

Other Weekly IMM Events

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