



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

**December 2017**

**IMM CONTACTS**

[ithacamonthlymeeting.org](http://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](mailto:IMMRSF-L-request@cornell.edu)  
with message body as simply: join

**Marilyn's List:**

To email Friends and others 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](mailto:mlr17@cornell.edu)

**Newsletter**

Submit contributions to [clarkberg@cornell.edu](mailto:clarkberg@cornell.edu). See the IMM Calendar, back page, for the next deadline.

**The Friends Center for Racial Justice and Me**

—*Ruth Yarrow*

I'm writing on this first anniversary of the Friends Center for Racial Justice (FCRJ) to share my story with the Center. My husband Mike and I worked on peace, justice and environmental issues for decades. Since returning to Ithaca in 2015, working for racial justice especially called to me. I attended the White Privilege Conference in Philadelphia with many others from the Meeting, attended a meeting of IMM members wanting to work on the issue, and volunteered to start an IMM subcommittee for racial justice education. The subcommittee was successful in encouraging three dozen IMM Friends to read *Waking Up White* and discuss it in six small groups. We showed several films on racial justice and involved European and African American community members in discussions after the films. A number of Friends came to pre-Meeting discussions on several Sundays to share their thoughts and struggles with racial justice efforts.

Although I strongly supported launching the FCRJ and was very glad Angela attended our films, I assumed the subcommittee would continue even after the FCRJ began its work. I invited Angela to lunch to talk about the relationship of the education subcommittee and the FCRJ and to explain that I thought we European American Friends were answering the call of groups of people of color for white people to work on their own racism.

While Angela understood my rationale for the IMM subcommittee, she suggested that I ask Friends in the IMM Ad Hoc Committee on Racial Justice and the education subcommittee if they felt in unity with the mission of FCRJ and felt led to be a part of it. The mission includes following leadership from people of color when working on racism, and the need for white activists to be accountable to people of color. What she had not said, but what I had heard because of my bias of wanting to preserve the education subcommittee, was that since the FCRJ was a reality, we could lay down the IMM subcommittee. This is an example of how easy it is for me not to really listen when my way of taking action is challenged.

I was surprised by my own reaction – resistance! Nancy Riffer challenged my willingness to follow leadership from people of color by asking “If Angela asked you to stop leading the subcommittee for six months, would you do that?” My response was, “Why?” I could feel a wave of pride of some kind of ownership of the subcommittee and anger that anyone would tell me what to do.

I met with Angela and Nancy again, together with members of the IMM Racial Justice Committee and Education Subcommittee. I was beginning to realize that I had a lot of ego invested in how I thought that effective activism should occur. This time I was able to hear Angela say something that found a crack in my shell of anger and ego. She noted that of course white people can work on their own racism but often at some point, when they only meet with other European Americans, they begin to justify their continued internalized racism. I remembered our pre-Meeting conversations and realized that I had been

*FCRJ, continued on page 2*

## FCRJ, cont. from page 1

getting stuck when Friends described the depressing sense of guilt they carried around the issue that caused them to back off from being active on it. I began to see that starting our work on racism by focusing on our goal of a beloved community rather than getting bogged down guilt would be a more positive way to begin. And to be able to do that with Friends of color was a valuable opportunity. It was then I started to understand Angela's emphasis on community classes.

The classes seemed to me at first to have a surprisingly loose structure, with participants reading any amount in any one of an array of books Angela had available – or to read anything else. Our classes were closer to personal discussions and worship sharing than any class I ever attended, but then I noticed they provided a welcoming atmosphere for sharing our struggles with racism. Angela's approach lured me rather than drove me into reading books that I had avoided, including the tome authored by Donna McDaniel and Vanessa July titled *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans and the Myth of Racial Justice*, and now Ibram X Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*.

I am developing friendships with some people of color in my neighborhood and community that both challenge me and bring me real joy. Their wise counsel, when I was preparing a keynote address for the Haiku North America conference in Santa Fe last September, was to include my own mistakes. For example, in a previous speech I'd asked why few haiku poets write about social and political issues. This time I became aware of my racist assumption that white poets' work is what counts. Before I hadn't even thought to look for haiku in collections, periodicals and anthologies by people of color. As a result of confessing this and including many haiku by African Americans, Native Americans, and interned Japanese Americans, I was able to deliver a keynote on racial justice to which the over 200 haiku poets responded very positively.

In short, the more I learn, the more I realize I don't yet understand, but I feel strongly that Angela's work with the FCRJ is helping me get my feet on the long path of moving toward a racially just "beloved community."

To support the FCRJ, I would like to offer my watercolor note cards and books of haiku for sale after Meeting on two Sundays, December 3 and December 17. All that you spend will go to support the Center.

— Ruth Yarrow

## December in IMM History

### 10 Years Ago (December 9, 2007)

Garry Thomas reported for the ad hoc Committee on Iraqi Immigrants. They have met with the family of Dhia Abed Waheed, at their home. Friends are meeting with the family for informal "English as Second Language" lessons, taking family members shopping, and collecting financial donations. This Iraqi family experiences a very real isolation as they contend with cultural differences in a new country. The ad hoc committee has a list of needs, and we are all encouraged to take a look and help in any way possible. Garry brought a request that donations be collected every third First Day, specifically for immigrant families; request approved.

### 15 Years Ago (December 8, 2002)

Trustees continued investigation of the process of incorporating IMM, considering now how Friends will comply with NYS regulations on "voting" and eligibility. After Trustees have distributed information and questions have been clarified, IMM will consider a Minute to define who is eligible to participate in the decision on whether or not to incorporate. There will be a Called Meeting at which this decision will be made. [Minutes of incorporation were approved the following April.]

### 40 Years Ago (December 12, 1977)

Plans for Christmas celebrations were announced. On 18 December after Meeting for Worship in the Forum [Anabel Taylor Hall], we will go down to the One World Room. First Day School students will read Christmas selections from their Bibles. There will be carol singing by all of us. A dish-to-pass lunch will follow. Members of the First Day School expect to prepare ice cream. After lunch there will be dancing. On Christmas Day we will meet for worship at 11:00 AM at the Hector Meeting House. We are advised to bring an appropriate message to share.

### 80 Years Ago (December 12, 1937)

A special business meeting was held to consider taking some action toward membership as a monthly meeting in either the Friends Fellowship Council or Scipio Quarterly Meeting. The meeting was well-attended and all agreed that Ithaca Friends should join the Fellowship Council. The clerk was instructed to write a letter of application. A committee of Grace Mekeel and Walter Balderston was appointed to investigate the various classes of membership. [Ithaca Friends were welcomed as a monthly meeting of the American Friends Fellowship Council, announced on February 27, 1938. The first business meeting of Ithaca Monthly Meeting was held in the library of Barnes Hall at Cornell on March 11, 1938.]

## Helen Schantz has moved

A little before my 90th birthday, my beloved family encouraged me to accept my daughter Jane's loving invitation to move into the downstairs apartment in her home. I had become more frail and they were all concerned about my living alone, even though I was near to both my grandson Kyle and my daughter Sarah and her husband Eric.

It was a difficult move for I felt at first in mourning, having to leave the house that Karl built forty years ago - yet a gift of Love came in seeing that Karl's spirit could both come with me and remain in that home, (where our daughter Faith and her husband Tom can now stay on their visits from Pittsburgh). Jane and all the family worked incredibly hard to prepare this space for me, clearing and storing many of Jane's things so that there would be space for mine. I am so grateful! And this is a spacious apartment, filled with loved furniture, Karl's pottery still in use and his paintings up on the walls. Yes, it already feels like home. My daughter Karen and her husband Alan are just ten minutes away and promise to bring my great-granddaughter, to visit, once I'm settled in. I am receiving much, much love and feel so blessed!

My new address is 142 Indian Creek Road, Ithaca, NY 14850-1331. With caring,

— Helen Schantz

## Support the Cornell Elves Program

The Elves Program was founded in 1989 to benefit needy children in Tompkins County and the surrounding area. Thanks to hundreds of volunteers, the program has provided clothing, school supplies, and toys to thousands of students from dozens of area schools. We will be coordinating funding and donations for IMM to the program. Participants have the option of sponsoring a child themselves by selecting a profile and purchasing all the items on the form (usually a \$125-150 endeavor), donating money toward the sponsorship of a child or children in the program, or helping with the procurement of items with funds collected.

I have profiles looking for sponsors. If you know you would like one, let me know and I will email a profile to you. If you are not able to sponsor a child yourself, but would like to make a donation to the Meeting's communal fund to cover as many local youth as we can, donations can be handed to me, Melissa Blake, or Melissa Travis Dunham in person or can be dropped in the mail to Gina Varrichio, 166 Crescent Place, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Checks can be made out to Gina Varrichio to streamline the process or, if you're more comfortable, Ithaca Monthly Meeting with "Cornell Elves" in the memo line.

The deadline for all purchases as well as financial donations is Sunday, December 10.

Thank you again for your generosity!

— Gina Varrichio

## Taiji class has moved

Taiji has left the Meeting House and will be moving to Centerline Fitness & Martial Arts starting this Friday 12/01/17 at 7:30pm. For more information about this peaceful martial arts class, contact Chris Dunham for more information

## Do Quakers Celebrate Christmas?

A FAQ on the Friends General Conference website includes the following:

### How do Quakers celebrate Christmas?

In modern times, most Quakers celebrate a low-key Christmas, and sometimes Easter, as part of our larger culture. However, traditionally, Quakers did not celebrate any religious holidays because all days are "holy days."

The only mention of holidays in the current edition of New York Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice* is in a section entitled "... In Tradition":

*Refusal to participate in war, strict honesty in business, equality of men and women, the gentle upbringing of children, noncoercion of conscience, the settlement of differences without suing each other in courts of law, declining to observe traditional religious holidays, and nonconformity to fashion in dress and conduct became some of the more enduring traditions of the Society.*

As with most things Quaker, interpretations vary. For example, the Faith and Practice used by the "Friends of Truth Glenside Meeting" (a small independent Quaker meeting) holds:

*Jesus Christ has not established special days; therefore Friends of Truth does not, as a church, celebrate religious or civil holidays. When in company with others who observe days, we ask members to exercise restraint and to be careful that their conduct does not support superstitions or material wastefulness that sometimes accompany such celebrations.*

In the days leading up to Christmas, Ithaca Monthly Meeting has typically held some variation of a Christmas "pagaent" or play, in addition to dish-to-pass supper. (Our homey pagaent is usually quite charming and manages to make me tear up.) See the calendar on page 6 for the dates this year.

— Marin Clarkberg

## Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

### Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, November 12, 2017

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Clerk: John Lewis

Assistant Clerk: Bronwyn Mohlke

Recording Clerks: Marin Clarkberg, Blair Jennings

(The @ signifies that the minute has been read and approved during Meeting. Copies of all written reports are on file with and available from the Clerk or Recording Clerk.)

#### 2017 10.1 Opening Worship

*"May words of the Spirit be spoken, and words of the Spirit be heard."*

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on November 12, 2017. At 12:10 pm, ten Friends gathered and settled into worship. Clerk recognized Nancy Riffer who was holding the Meeting in the Light.

Clerk read from *Spiritual Simplicity: Simplify Your Life and Save Your Soul*, 1997 by David Yount:

*It is a mistake to believe that for life to be full it must be like a room crammed with furniture. Thoreau claimed he had only three chairs in his house—"one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society." A crowded life leaves no space and no time for enjoyment. Crowding distracts the mind, dulls the senses, and starves the soul. Simplicity enriches.*

#### 2017 10.2 Peace and Social Justice Report

Garry Thomas, reporting on behalf of Peace and Social Justice, reminded Friends that the committee receives a budget of \$2000 to donate to political and social causes, with \$1000 made at the discretion of the committee and \$1000 subject to Monthly Meeting approval. Garry spoke to the principals that guide the committee's choices and noted that one theme this year has been concerns relating to prisons and incarceration. The committee asks that Meeting approves donations of \$200 each be made to the following five organizations:

- **Afghan Women's Fund:** AWF continues its work in the rural areas of Afghanistan despite the security situation which makes life so difficult. The Fund is dedicated to helping Afghan women through education via the opening and continued support of schools for Afghan girls.
- **Women Wage Peace:** WWP is a movement of women from the political right, center and left, Jewish and Arab, religious and secular, united in the demand for a political agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They do grassroots work alongside work with Knesset members to reach their goal.
- **College Initiative Upstate** (an organization operating under the umbrella of OAR of Tompkins County): CIU is a learning community of educators, students, and volunteers who work together to build pathways from criminal justice involvement to college and beyond. CIU works with students who have had involvement with the criminal justice system including: incarceration, probation, parole, involvement with alternative to incarceration programs, and arrest without conviction.

- **Prison Action Network:** This organization seeks to unite people who are incarcerated in NYS, people who have a loved one in a NYS prison, and people who care about the impact incarceration has upon our society. They produce a monthly newsletter, "Building Bridges."
- **National Religious Campaign Against Torture.** This membership organization is committed to ending U.S. sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Over 300 religious groups have joined to ensure that U.S. sponsored torture of detainees never happens again, and to end the use of torture in U.S. prisons and detention facilities, in particular the use of prolonged solitary confinement.

Friends approve the five donations totaling \$1000.

Garry then noted that the \$1000 at the discretion of the committee had been allocated as follows:

- \$330 to **Friends Center for Racial Justice:** Funds are for the general support of the ongoing work of the Friends Center for Racial Justice, which provides a space where Friends can come together to work on racism within the Religious Society of Friends and beyond
- \$100 to **OAR** (Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources): OAR advocates for and assists people who are or have been incarcerated in the Tompkins County Jail, as well as their family and friends. OAR also provides programs which help constructively restore and maintain their clients' inclusion in the community
- \$200 to **Friends' Peace Teams, Paz en las Americas.** For support of their ongoing work, especially their Alternatives to Violence Project workshops and trainings, and the trauma healing work
- \$200 to the **Peter DeMott Catholic Worker House.** This interdenominational faith-based community is best known for its anti-war activism, specifically for its civil resistance actions at the Hancock airbase in East Syracuse, and Saturday morning vigils at the CVS corner against militarized drones.
- \$100 to the **Tompkins County Immigrants' Rights Committee Rapid Response.** This diverse network of community volunteers is organizing to respond to calls from people who are pursued by Immigration officers in our community and share resources with those facing arrest, detention and deportation based on their lack of citizenship.
- \$70 for an ad for a concert supporting the **Village at Ithaca.** Village at Ithaca's mission is to advocate for excellence and equity in Ithaca's public schools, by developing strategic community relationships, programs, and services to ensure that students, particularly Black, Latino, and low-income students, consistently meet or exceed local and New York State standards of achievement. An ad was purchased in the program for their October 14th Lift Every Voice benefit concert.

Friends received the report. @

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### 2017.10.3 Naming Committee

Bronwyn Mohlke reported on behalf of the Naming Committee, a group that recommends the membership to Nominating Committee. The committee recommends Pat Pingel and Marion DeGrossa begin membership terms beginning immediately and Antonia Saxon to begin a term in January 2018. Friends approved the nominations.

### 2017.10.4 Monthly Meeting Partners Project Report

John Lewis reported on the status of the Monthly Meeting Partners Project, a collaboration with New York Yearly Meeting. John described the initial steps, including communication with Melinda Wenner Bradley and that the members of the Partners team are Bronwyn Molhke, Gina Varrichio, Asha, Ellie Rosenberg, Angela Hopkins and John Lewis. One Friend expressed a desire to participate in later stages of this discussion. John welcomed additional participants now and in the future. Friends received the report.

### 2017.10.5 Neighborhood Outreach: Report on Habitat Build

Karen Friedeborn reported that several Friends contributed on Thursday October 19 to the construction of a house quite near to the Third Street Meetinghouse that is being constructed through Habitat for Humanity. Karen passed around pictures and shared a brief account of the day. Friends received the report. @

### 2017.10.6 Treasurer's Report

Mike Simkin, Treasurer, reported on the state of our finances as of the end of October. As we approach the end of our fiscal year, Mike has been responding to various committees about balances. Mike highlighted several lines in the printed report, including a negative balance in the General Fund. A negative balance at this time of the year is not unusual, as a disproportionate share of donations

are received at the end of the year. A Friend recommended that we might like to have more printed copies for end of year report in January. Friends received the report. @

Mike noted that another person might like to assume the Treasurer role and that much of the job has been automated and streamlined.

### 2017.10.7 Other Concerns

A Friend noted that several Friends went to Binghamton to hear Reverend Barber speak for the Poor People's Campaign. Several faith groups in Ithaca are join the Labor Religion Coalition as a part of this campaign, and Ithaca Monthly Meeting might want to consider joining. Clerk suggested that such a request be routed through the Peace and Social Justice committee for additional consideration.

A Friend expressed concern about our electronic mailing lists. In particular, our listserv is currently limited to Ithaca Monthly Meeting events only, a narrow scope that can feel overly restrictive. Ministry and Worship will add the topic of electronic communications to its agenda.

A Friend reminded us that the time for annual reports approaches, and is searching for a more meaningful way to engage with those reports. Clerk asked Ministry and Worship to take up this concern. @

### 2017.10.8 Closing Worship

Nine Friends settled into silent worship at 1:15 before adjourning. Our next regular Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held at the rise of Meeting on December 10, 2017.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Marin Clarkberg*

## **Women's Chair Yoga, Mondays and Thursdays 11a-noon**

Women of all ages are welcome to gather for gentle, yet powerful restoration of heart, mind, soul, strength. No experience or equipment needed. Please check with Nancy Gabriel the day before: 339-7123; ntg2@cornell.edu. We offer a donation to the teacher.

## **Christmas Party at The Clarkberg's December 16, 6:30-9:30p**

Friends, join Marin and Thea for some holiday fellowship at our home, 150 Giles Street. Bring a dish-to-pass if you like, or just come make gingerbread cookies and sing carols.

# **December 2017 Calendar of Ithaca Monthly Meeting**

## **Men's Fellowship Lunch Thursday, December 7, noon**

The \$10 lunch buffet at Diamond's Indian restaurant provides a great opportunity to get together! For more information, contact Lynn Podhaski at lynnpodhaski@yahoo.com or Liam Murphy at liamgbmurphy@verizon.net.

## **Women's Fellowship Friday, December 8, 7p**

Join for casual conversation, no agenda, with or without knitting. We are going to try meeting upstairs at Wegman's Cafe this time. There is an elevator, many food options, and hopefully enough room for all of us!

## **ARCH Social for Elders Saturday, December 9, 1-3p**

Come join us for an afternoon of singing, fun, and good conversation at the Third Street Meetinghouse. We'll have finger foods, carols, and a gift exchange. Wrap and bring something from home that is nice but that you would like to re-gift. We'll draw names and each person gets to choose a gift. If we have unclaimed gifts, they will be donated. Hope to see you there!

## **Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Sunday, December 10, Rise of Meeting**

Join the Quaker decision-making process. Proposed agenda items should be sent to our clerk, John Lewis, by the preceding Monday.

## **Christmas Celebration Sunday, December 17, 11a**

We will have a special Christmas celebration during the last portion of Meeting for Worship followed by our annual holiday dish-to-pass dinner. We often have a big gathering that day, so bringing more food than our typical monthly brunch would be great!

## **Christmas Eve Meeting for Worship Sunday, December 24, 7p**

Join us for Worship on at the Burt House / Friends Center for Racial Justice at 227 North Willard Way in Ithaca.

## **Newsletter submissions due Friday, December 29, 5p**

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

## **Dish-to-Pass Brunch Sunday, December 31, Rise of Meeting**

Bring something tasty to share if you can. All are welcome.

## **Looking ahead to 2018: Last Friday Suppers**

Our last Friday of the month Soup Suppers will start up again in January, and go through April. We look forward to evenings of fellowship together! If you would like to make the soup one month, please get in touch with Bronwyn (220-3219 / BJQMohlke@gmail.com).

### **On Sundays**

10:30a **Meeting for Worship** at the Third Street Meetinghouse

11:15a **Children in childcare** enter the meetingroom for inter-generational Meeting for Worship.

### **Other Weekly IMM Events**

**Mid-week Meeting at the Burt House  
Wednesdays at 7:30p**

The Burt House is at 227 North Willard Way, Ithaca.