



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

**February 2017**

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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)

**Iraqis in Ithaca**

by *Marin Clarkberg*

... *I was a stranger and you invited me in.* — *Matthew 25:35*

With the very recent executive order to ban all people from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States, I have been reflecting anew on my recent work with university administrators at two Iraqi universities. I work in university administration at Cornell, and over the last two years I have been consulting with universities in other countries on the subject of using data to improve decision-making processes and strategic planning in university administration.

In March of 2016, I visited Baghdad to work face-to-face with a group of perhaps fifteen colleagues from the Iraqi Ministry of Education, the University of Baghdad, and Kufa University (a bit south of Babylon). While that experience was intensely interesting, it was not as personally transformative as what followed. Specifically: in August last year, I was able to host five of these colleagues in Ithaca for six days. (We had hoped to bring seven people, but even before Trump's presidency, it was not so easy for an Iraqi to get a visa to come to the US.) We spent 10-16 hours a day together over those six days, and learned an immense amount from one another. The visit was funded through a grant from the US State Department via the US Embassy in Baghdad.

Four of my guests were senior administrators: one was the equivalent of a provost, and three were vice-provost types. The fifth, the youngest at only 28, is an impressive software developer. None of the five had ever visited the US before. One had been to England and China previously, but the others had had only limited travels in the Muslim world.

The four older guys were observant [Shia] Muslims, and were very keen to keep *halal* while they were here. This meant that they would not drink alcohol—and indeed they refused to even take one sip of Reed's "ginger beer" because of the offensive name—and that they had to keep vegetarian here because *halal* meat is quite uncommon in Ithaca. In contrast, the young computer guy, R-, was explicitly anti-religion. He said multiple times, "My religion is science!" R- was eager to drink actual beer, and he even ate bacon at the hotel breakfast. In theory, this could cause big problems for R-, but in fact his colleagues did not hassle him for his lack of religious observance. (They *did* hassle him when he made negative statements about Iraq, such as that women's opportunities are limited or that the government is corrupt. His perceived lack of patriotism was more concerning than his lack of religiosity.)

Our days together were largely filled with meetings with various administrators. One of our Cornell participants was Israeli, and I made a point of inviting her to dinner with us one evening. It was a big table and I didn't hear all of the conversation, but I did hear some discussion of life in Israel, the Israeli military and Netanyahu. Later, I heard R- say that he never imagined meeting an actual Israeli. He found her to be an interesting person with interesting life experiences, and talking with her was really mind-opening for him. I think maybe he had imagined that Israelis would have horns or something.

*Iraqis in Ithaca, continued on page 2*

Some interesting religious notes: none of my five guests had ever heard of the concept of “kosher” and were surprised to learn that *kosher* meat was pretty much the same as *halal* meat. Twice, the subject of Easter was mentioned, and both times R- asked, “Oh is that the holiday with rabbits and eggs?” On the second occasion, I added, “Yes but it’s also supposedly when Jesus rose from the dead.” He absolutely did not know that. Then he taught me that Muslims believe that Jesus was not executed. He said that Muslims believe that Jesus went up to heaven (or whatever) before the execution and they send down a substitute to die in his place. (And I had never heard that.)

Perhaps the first or second night while R- and I were tasting each other’s microbrews at our group dinner, he leaned in to me and said, “It is so nice to have someone who understands me.” Subsequently, I took some time to give R- some extra attention and opportunities. For example, when the others wanted to go to the mall and R- was not interested, I took R- for a beer at the nearby pub. Another night, I took R- to a bar outside of Ithaca where everyone wore baseball caps. He *loved* experiencing this, and I truly enjoyed R-’s company.

Let me share some of what I learned of R-’s story. R-’s father was raised Sunni and his mother was Shia. (This difference mattered less under Saddam Hussein than it does today.) At some point, R-’s father converted to Christianity, but R-’s surname is Sunni and because of that R- will always be perceived as Sunni.

Twice, people have tried to kill R-, essentially because of his surname. As a safety precaution, R- now maintains two apartments on opposite sides of town and rents them under an assumed name... a name that is neither explicitly Sunni or Shia. All this makes him harder to kill.

R- told me a lot of stories about his life in Baghdad. Like: when the US invaded in 2003 and how the whole family shut themselves inside of an interior room to protect themselves from breaking windows, and how there was no electricity or running water and how they prepared themselves for a chemical attack. He said you only really know a person when you see how they behave in a dire situation like that. There was a lot praying and crying. And then how after the bombing stopped and it was quiet he went outside and everything was covered with rubble and dust and debris. He and his family had survived; Baghdad had fallen. There were many Iraqis outside, in shock, when an American humvee came down the street. Many were cautiously curious but almost no one spoke English. R- stepped forward and said “hello” to the American soldier; this would be the first American he ever met. He was afraid the soldier would be mean and shout at him, but the soldier smiled warmly and said, “Howdy!” (R- asked me to tell him what “Howdy” means.) The soldier took off his helmet and showed R- that he kept a picture of his girlfriend inside. R- said, “oh she is beautiful.” He didn’t know what else to say. (That’s the US for you. We will bomb your country, but one-on-one, I tell you, we are very nice!)

R-’s father had served two terms of service in the Iran-Iraq war, serving one in his own father’s name (that is, R-’s grandfather) so that the old man wouldn’t have to serve. R-’s mother worked in a

chemical plant under Hussein. After three years of work there, she developed cancer and died.

I learned less about the four non-beer-drinkers, but a few things. One is a cousin of the current prime minister. Another is a major supporter of Sadr, a very influential cleric whose followers breached Baghdad’s Green Zone last summer. (This fellow made the most of the opportunity enjoy to Target and the other shops at our mall. He secured a George Foreman Grill as well as a raft of beauty products that his wife had asked him to pick up.)

The third fellow kept trying to describe to me his work in chemistry, the papers he has published, and how hard it is to advance his career in Iraq given that they have zero scientific equipment. (I arranged for the chair of Chemistry at Cornell to give a brief tour of the facilities here, and it was both great and heartbreaking.) The fourth was R-’s boss and kindly looked the other way at R-’s scandalous behavior, both in Ithaca and in Iraq. R- says that while his boss toes the line himself, he is really not judgmental.

Since my Iraqi friends returned to Iraq, we have remained in touch. Indeed, the very first person who I communicated with after Trump’s election was my friend R-. (He texted when it was early morning here in Ithaca, but midday in Baghdad.) These colleagues continue to help me to understand what it is like to try to run a university when Isis’s activities interfere with exam dates, assassinations have seriously depleted faculty head counts, and bombed-out facilities litter the campus of 80,000 students. And as crazy as it sounds given their environment, I try to help them think about how to use real data and facts and analysis to inform a plan for a better future for higher education in the Arab world.

The value of the visit here was profound, certainly for me, but also for many of the other Cornellians and other university administrators (including Kris Altucher and her colleagues at Tompkins Cortland Community College) who had privilege of interacting with these people. I believe it was also mind-opening for all five of our guests who: got to experience the companionship of many warm Americans; walked on Ithaca’s Commons and marveled at its quiriness; and had deep exchanges with students, staff and faculty from different backgrounds and other countries (even Israel!).

My Quaker faith was tangential but I think not irrelevant to the work I shared with the Iraqis. I am reminded of the oft-quoted words of George Fox:

*Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.*

It seems to me that such a visit is one of the very best ways we can learn to understand and respect one another as human beings—as special embodiments of the divine. I am sad to reflect that, for the moment, the opportunity of having Iraqis visit us with us in that way has been taken away.

## Acknowledging, Affirming & Continuing to Build a Community of Practice Around Youth Work

The Farmington-Scipio Region Youth Institute is sponsoring this event on March 4, 2017 at Rochester Meeting.

*A "group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better. Members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short, a shared practice."—Etienne Wenger*

This will be a daylong conference for reflecting on, celebrating and strengthening youth work and youth workers throughout the Farmington-Scipio region, facilitated by Melinda Wenner Bradley, Chris DeRoller and Mike Clark and sponsored by the region.

For more information see <http://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/western-ny-quakers/events/regional-youth-institute>

## Friends General Conference Summer Gathering: Ripples Start Where Spirit Moves

The FGC (Friends General Conference) Gathering is an annual get-together of more than a thousand Friends from across North America for a week of worship, workshops, recreation, fellowship, and much more for Friends of all ages. The Gathering moves around to different regions of North America each year. In 2017 it will be July 2-8 on the campus of Niagara University in Niagara Falls, NY. Though there is plenty to do on campus, you may be interested to know that the Niagara Frontier is rich in history. Home to over 1,000 years of Seneca Nation history, several centuries of African American History, and to Quakers, who built the very first religious structure in Erie County.

From the Niagara University campus, one can take the Discover Niagara free shuttle to over a dozen tourist sites including Niagara Falls, the Underground Railroad Center and Whirlpool State Park.

Be sure to reserve your vacation time now. More information is available at the Gathering website and will be updated as we approach registration in April.

<http://www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering>

*Two framed artworks about peace by Ann Rhodin are hanging upstairs in the Third Street Meetinghouse. They are best viewed in person.*

## Sweepers Needed

In recent months Friends have seen or heard a few announcements from Third Street Meetinghouse Committee (TSMC) about the need for more people to volunteer as Sweepers, F/friends who make sure our Third Street Meetinghouse is tidy and ready for Meeting for Worship each week. There is a need for more people to volunteer as Sweepers.

As TSMC explained during the IMM budgeting process (and as our approved budget lines reflect), if there is not a sufficient number of volunteers from Meeting who can commit to being Sweepers, we will plan to hire someone on a regular schedule to keep the Meetinghouse clean.

Are you willing and able to volunteer an hour or two in the Meetinghouse once a month, or less frequently, taking care of basic cleaning tasks? There are a few Sweepers who have committed to sweeping once a month; a few others volunteer less frequently, as their schedules allow. Everyone who contributes their time as they can is a big help to making our Meetinghouse look presentable and be a pleasant space in which to worship. The tasks are not difficult and a checklist is posted on the inside of the closet door off the kitchen. Some F/friends sweep together and use the time for socializing and fellowship. This is also a job that adults and children can do together.

If you're ready to sign up for a sweeping shift, visit our online sign-up form: <http://signup.com/go/quYFUq>

If you'd like more information, please contact Melissa Travis Dunham, at [mtravis823@yahoo.com](mailto:mtravis823@yahoo.com) or 607-277-9599.



**Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends**  
**Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, January 8, 2016**

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Outgoing Clerk: Antonia Saxon; Incoming Clerk: John Lewis  
Outgoing Asst Clerk: Marilyn Ray; Incoming: 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 01.1 Gathering**

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society Friends met in Monthly Meeting for

Worship with Attention to Business, and for the Annual Meeting of IMMRSF Inc., on

January 8, 2017. Copies of the annual reports from the corporation officers were distributed. A sign-in sheet was circulated. At 12:24pm, 38 Friends gathered and settled into silent worship.

The Clerk recognized Karen Reixach for holding the gathering in the Light, then read the following from *Where Should I Stand? A Field Guide for Monthly Meeting Clerks*, Elizabeth Boardman:

*How can you convey in a brief sentence or two how participation in the business meeting gives us a prime opportunity to practice our testimonies about listening for Divine guidance, "listening beyond the words" offered by others, seeking a unity that will work for all? How can you explain without sounding elitist that it is the people who attend meeting for business over and over again for years who are truly "practicing Quakers"?*

*I never got good at it. It wasn't until my term was up that I encountered Bill Taber's words:*

*"The meeting for business, if it be Spirit-filled and properly understood, is a hands-on, laboratory-like experience in which the whole fellowship comes face to face with Spirit's demands for the sacrifice of time, treasure, convenience, and prejudice. When opinions differ widely and the need for spiritual discernment becomes crucial, the best are driven as never in a meeting for worship, to seek that Spirit which can sustain harmony while waiting for the right leading."*

After a period of silent worship, the Clerk introduced Marilyn Ray, Clerk of Trustees and President of the Corporation.

**2017 01.2 Annual Meeting of Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Incorporated.**

Present: Barbara Barry, Melissa Blake, Tom Brown, Marion Craig DaGrossa, Chris Dunham, Mellisa Travis Dunham, James Finlay, Nancy Gabriel, Nancy Hillegas, Angela Hopkins, Blair Jennings, Janice Kelly, Carolyn Kenyon, John Lewis, Ed Lisbe, Charles Mohler, Bronwyn Mohlke, Elsa Mohlke, Steve Mohlke, Laura Peters, Pat Pingle, Marilyn Ray, Annalisa Raymer, Karen Reixach, Nancy Riffer, Ellie Rosenberg, Antonia Saxon, Elizabeth Schneider, Lenora Schneller, Tony Serviente, Mike Simkin, Dreia Spies, Gail Steinhart, Joanne Sturgeon, Connie Thomas, Garry Thomas, Susan Wolfe, Ruth Yarrow, Alexa Yesukevich.

- 1) Marilyn Ray, Clerk of Trustees and President of the Corporation convened the Annual Meeting of IMMRSF, Inc., and formally introduced the officers for 2017 as follows: Tony Serviente, President; Tom Brown, Recording Clerk and Secretary; Mike Simkin, Treasurer. She then gave the President's Annual Report for 2016.
- 2) Marilyn Ray, at the request of Nancy Hillegas, Recording Clerk of Trustees and Secretary of the Corporation, read the 2016 annual report of the Secretary of the Corporation.
- 3) Mike Simkin, Treasurer of the Meeting and of the Corporation, gave the end of the fiscal year budget report. Mike then noted comments/corrections to the printed 2016 Treasurer's/Budget Report and reviewed several budget highlights, including the following:
  - a) Total contributions for 2016 were \$63,419 or 98% of our 2016 request.
  - b) Our total income for 2016 was above that which was budgeted and so made up for the difference in contributions.
  - c) Liquid assets total \$120,164 with no debt.
  - d) Balance for the general fund is \$0; balance for the general fund reserve is \$14,834.

Last, he reviewed major financial transactions/events for 2016, including historical data/ specific amounts for a variety of funds, and answered questions as posed.

Meeting received the reports with gratitude. This ended the Annual Meeting of the Corporation. @

**2017 01.3 Outgoing clerk**, Antonia Saxon turned the meeting over to incoming clerk, John Lewis. She gave him the book that was given to her at the beginning of her tenure by then outgoing clerk, Steve Mohlke.

**2017 01.4 Incoming clerk**, John Lewis offered his gratitude and a few remarks before beginning the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

**2017 01.5 Ministry and Worship**

Antonia Saxon reported for Ministry and Worship regarding support for the AVP ministry of Shirley Way and Fazilee Buechel in El Salvador. IMM treasurer provided the financial mechanism by which this support can be provided and indicated there is significant money in the budget to provide this support. Clerk read the following minute:

Ithaca Monthly Meeting supports the continuing AVP work of Shirley Way and Fazilee Buechel in El Salvador. We hold them in our prayers and will be supporting their work financially. We request that the Witness Coordinating Committee of New York Yearly Meeting also provide financial support for this peace ministry.

Meeting approved committing to provide financial support for Shirley's ministry in El Salvador, and to continue discernment to

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Minutes, continued from page 4

determine the best source of those funds from within the Meeting's budget. @

### 2017 01.6 Annual Reports

Friends presented the annual reports for the following committees: Children and the Life of the Meeting (CALM), Hector Meeting House, Ad Hoc Working Group for Immigrant Support, Ministry and Worship, Neighborhood Outreach, Newsletter, Pastoral Care, Peace Witness and Social Justice.

Friends received the annual reports. @

### 2017 01.7 Other concerns.

1. A concern was raised about the trial of a new amplification system.
2. A concern was raised about the lack of a basket for Kitchen Cupboard on this, the second Sunday. It was decided to put it out at the conclusion of this meeting as well as next First Day.

Friends approved the minute @

Twenty-nine Friends settled into worship at 1:35pm before adjourning. Our next regular Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held at the rise of Meeting on February 12, 2017.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Blair Jennings*

## Community Calendar

### Superbowl with Quakers Sunday, February 5, 6p

Meeting with attention to football: the Dunhams' annual Superbowl party at 105 Dunmore Place, Ithaca. This is a fun time to socialize with F/friends and watch the "Big Game" ... or ignore the game and just socialize. (If you don't even know what teams are playing, you'll be in good company.) Pizza will be provided. Please bring other finger food or drinks to share. An RSVP by Feb 1 is helpful but not strictly required: 277-9599, Mtravis823@yahoo.com or C\_J\_dunham@yahoo.com.

## January in IMM History

### 5 Years Ago (February 12, 2012)

Marin Clarkberg read the report from Ministry and Worship on the use of alcohol on properties owned by Ithaca Monthly Meeting. Monthly meeting wrestled with a concern about an alcohol policy for the Burt House because it serves both as residence and as a place for Quaker events. Friends APPROVED a policy stating:

- no smoking indoors
- care should be taken while smoking outdoors not to let smoke enter the buildings
- no recreational use of drugs, legal or illegal, at any of our properties
- no consumption of alcohol at Third Street or Hector meetinghouses, indoors or out

### 20 Years Ago (February 10, 1997)

Jan Kelly was welcomed into membership of IMM upon transfer from Newark, DE MM.

### 25 Years Ago (February 10, 1992)

IMM approved a letter to be sent to Friends United meeting indicating that our distress of their policy of not employing gays and lesbians kept us from participating in their Chain of Prayer.

### 60 Years Ago (IMM State of the Society Report)

The State of the Society seems generally good. Meetings for worship are well attended and regularly held. There is a large and active First Day School. Our ministry to college students is carried out by dedicated young people with considerable perspective and outreach. The social and religious causes to which Meeting has committed itself range from Africa and Asia to local housing and segregation. Individual Friends are extremely active in peace, civil liberties, Negro and International affairs on both a local and national scale. Financially, the Meeting finds it easy to raise its budget, contribute to Friends' work, and undertake extensive national concerns. The vocal ministry is good. Monthly Meetings for Business are carried out with dispatch and with a sense of mutual inquiry. No further moves, except for a survey of needs, have been made toward a permanent meetinghouse. It seems to be the general opinion that our quarters in Anabel Taylor Hall are sufficient for our present needs.

### 65 Years Ago (February 12, 1952)

Discussion of an unnamed query led to thoughts that better use of silence could be useful in the Meeting for Business, as well as reading some of the excellent printed material on the conduct of business meetings. It was stressed that each one of us can help or hinder the 'patient search for unity' and that all need to feel the security of being able to share our deepest thoughts and feelings with the knowledge that they will be understood by others, even if we cannot always agree.

— Tom Brown, IMM Historian

# February 2017 Calendar of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

## Women's Fellowship Friday, February 3, 7p

Join for casual conversation, no agenda, with or without knitting. We are going to try some different locations... at least until the Ithaca Bakery is open later than 8:00. This month, we will try the Watershed at is 121 West MLK Jr. / State Street (between Cayuga & Geneva, next to the State Theatre). The Watershed has snacks, sandwiches, coffee, tea, beer, wine and cocktails. <http://www.the-watershedithaca.com/> Come check it/us out!

## Regional Extended Meeting for Worship Saturday, February 4, 8:30a

Ministry & Counsel committee of Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting invites you to our own Meetinghouse to experience Extended Meeting for Worship, running from 9:30am to 3pm with a break for a brown bag lunch, 12:30-1:30. Attend for a portion of the time or for the full day. For more information, contact Regional M&C co-clerk Heather M. Cook (Central Finger Lakes MM) at [burritolass2@gmail.com](mailto:burritolass2@gmail.com) or 908-377-9665.

## State of the Meeting Report: Discussion Sunday, February 5, Rise of Meeting

New York Yearly Meeting asks every Monthly Meeting to write a State of the Meeting report. These are all compiled into the State of the Society report, which is brought to Summer Sessions. This provides us with a wonderful opportunity to gather together and reflect on our Meeting's spiritual health and growth this past year. Please join us for this loving, tender event. NYYM offers five questions if they can be helpful in guiding the reflection:

1. What is the spiritual condition of your meeting? Where is there light? Where is there darkness?
2. Are meetings for worship and business held in expectant waiting for divine guidance? How do we feel about the quality of our worship and ministry?
3. How are love and unity fostered among us? If differences arise, how do we endeavor to reconcile them in a spirit of love and truth? How well do we do?
4. How do we make ourselves available in a tender and caring way when we sense a need for assistance in time of trouble? Do our members and attenders trust each other enough to make their needs known to others in the meeting?
5. How do we acknowledge the oneness of humanity and foster a loving spirit toward all people? Do we honor Friends' traditional testimony that all people are equal? How do we work to make these ideals a reality?

## On Sundays

- 10:20a **First Day School** gathers upstairs at Third Street.  
10:30a **Meeting for Worship** at the Third Street Meetinghouse  
11:15a **First Day School** attenders enter the meetingroom for intergenerational Meeting for Worship.

## Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Sunday, February 12, Rise of Meeting

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

## Friends Center for Racial Justice Friday, February 17 - Tuesday, February 21

The Friends Center for Racial Justice will be hosting its first event. The New York Yearly Meeting Task Group on Racism and European American Quakers Working to End Racism will be hold their meeting during this weekend. Ithaca Friends are invited to consider if they are called to the work of the Friends Center for Racial Justice and are invited for a time of fun, food and fellowship. Feel free to bring a friend.

## Newsletter submissions due Thursday, February 23, 5p

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

## Last Friday Night Supper Friday, February 24, 6p

We will gather again for supper on the last Friday of each month January through April. All are welcome. Soup and bread will be provided. Side dishes or desserts are welcome, but it is OK to arrive without bringing food to share. There is no agenda, just a chance to enjoy some non-rushed time together.

## Dish-to-Pass Brunch Sunday, February 26, Rise of Meeting

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

## ARCH Discussion Sunday, February 26, After Brunch

Our ARCH (Aging Resources Consultation & Help) visitors are hosting a discussion series on Brunch Sundays through April. Topics in the series will include resources for aging at home, guidelines on getting legal documents in order, and perhaps an intergenerational movie! You are also welcome to contact ARCH volunteers for more information: Bronwyn Mohlke, Elizabeth Schneider, Susan Wolf, and Betsy Root (from Perry City Meeting).

## 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.