



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

August 2009

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join IMMRSF-L "Your Name"
(include the quotes) in the first line of the body of the message.

Website: ithacamonthlymeeting.org

Looking for a Godly Outcome
by David Watt

When Friends talk about our meetings for business, we sometimes talk about “discerning the will of God.”

Friends talk that way, in part, because we wish to remind ourselves that Friendly organizations ought to make decisions on different grounds and in different ways than do other sorts of organizations. We ought not, we believe, to make our decisions by standards dictated by the marketplace or by national opinion. And we ought not, we think, to make our decisions on the basis of avoiding doing anything that might make us uncomfortable: good decisions often produce a certain amount of discomfort.

Talking about the will of God is a good way to remind ourselves how peculiar our discernment processes ought to be. For that reason, references to God’s will often have a highly salutary effect on Quaker meetings.

However, there might be something to be said for using an alternative phrase. The one I have in mind is “looking for a Godly outcome.” When we speak that way, we are less “Godly Outcome”, continued on page 2

Since our method of transacting business presumes that in a given matter there is a way that is in harmony with God’s plan, our search is for that right way, and not simply for a way which is either victory for some faction, or an expedient compromise. What we call “the Sense of the Meeting” is not the collected wisdom of those present, but the collective discernment of God’s will.

— *New England Yearly Meeting*
Faith & Practice

606 West Dryden Road, Freeville: Open House & Called Meeting

An historic church/meetinghouse is for sale. The building—in some disrepair—has approximately 4000 square feet on two floors. The plot is just over one acre, and the listing price is \$109,000.

Friends are invited to an open house to visit—and worship—in the building on Saturday, August 1st. The building will be open from 10am to noon, with Meeting for Worship in the space from 10:30 to 11:00.

On Sunday, August 9th, following the rise of Meeting for Worship at Hector Meetinghouse, there will be a Called Meeting to consider the property’s potential as a home for our meeting.



West Dryden Church, by Ann Rhodin

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS
Due August 27th

Materials for September’s newsletter may be submitted by the method of your choice to:

Rini Clarkberg
150 Giles St., Ithaca, NY 14850
279-4722 • mec30@cornell.edu



"Godly Outcome", continued from page 1

tempted to think that there is only one possible outcome of which God would approve. (God might want us to give \$1500 next year to help provide clean drinking water to people in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, she might want us to give \$1800 for such a project. It is by no means obvious that there is a single will of God on this issue.) When Friends speak of looking for a Godly outcome we also give ourselves lots of room to see differences between Friends as a positive good rather than an obstacle that needs to be overcome. (The differences between Friend X and Friend Y concerning a particular matter do not have to be seen as the result of one Friend having come closer to discovering the will of God than the other one has. Both Friends might be attracted to an outcome that would be genuinely Godly).

Speaking of finding a Godly outcome is helpful in another way, as well. Doing so reminds us of an important bit of Quaker theology. For Quakers, God can never be simply something outside of us and above us. Quakers believe that God is, in a real sense, a part of us. Thus it might not be appropriate for Quakers to assume that God has already made up her mind what the outcome of any given meeting for business ought to be before that meeting has taken place or for them to assume that the job of a meeting for business is to try to come up with the same answer that God has already come up [with]. That makes it sound a little like Quakers are playing a parlor game in which we are trying to read God's mind.

It might be helpful for us to entertain the possibility that meetings for business can be instruments that God uses to discover for herself what a Godly outcome might be. According to this way of looking at things, God could be seen pictured as sitting with us in our meeting for business. She has willingly taken on our limitations as well as our gifts. She is there with us: perhaps a little tired, but still knitting patiently and very much willing to learn something new.

Sometimes when she sees how arrogant and brittle and small-minded we can be, she blinks back a tear. Other times – for instance when she sees us being teachable and large-hearted – she beams with joy. But always she is with us. Hoping that she can work with us to make something useful and beautiful.

Perhaps that way of putting the matter is too extreme. God is certainly too large and too other to be captured by the homely metaphor I have adopted here. But you get the drift. It is possible that meetings for business are not really about discovering the one most excellent and predetermined course of action that God has already chosen for us. Instead they could be about learning to ask God to struggle for us and with us. Whether or not any given meeting for business is successful is determined at least as much by how open we have been to being used by God as by how wise the decision we reached turns out to have been.

Originally printed in the Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Newsletter, November 2005.

Review and Gratitude:

First Day School's School Year

Another school year has closed, and this note is to update the meeting on the work of our First Day School classes and the Children in the Life of the Meeting (CALM) committee over the last nine months. Our theme this year was "seeking," and we explored with our children Quaker history, testimonies, and living a Quaker life today.

The numbers of students at different ages this year required four separate classes: Sunbeams (up to 2nd grade), Flames (3rd and 4th), Lasers (5th to 7th), and Power Quakers (8th to 10th—which met on the 1st and 3rd Sundays). Attendance varied considerably over the 24 weeks that the FDS classes met, averaging 5-7 children for each of the classes.

Each class required an organizing, lead teacher as well as substitutes and assistant teachers. These teachers not only led the children while meeting was in session; they also came up with the ideas for the children to explore (activities, books/stories, projects, and more), developed those ideas, and implemented them; they each gave, in other words, significant donations of time and effort to the life of the meeting.

The lead teachers for each group—the ones who gave the most service to the children of the Ithaca meeting throughout the year—were Gina Varicchio and Ellie Rosenberg, Rini Clarkberg, Larry Clarkberg, and Janis Kelly. In addition, the following members of our meeting gave tremendous help as co-teachers, substitute

teachers, and assistants: Caitlin Loehr, Heather Ruff, Jeff deCastro, Sandra Steingraber, Wendy Wolfe, Alexa Yesukevich, Lynn Podhaski, and Susan Wolf. We applaud them all for their guidance given our children, and thank them very much for their service.

In addition to FDS classes, we held 7 Café days—all ages meeting together in the Café—when the local schools were on vacation and our children (and teachers) were more likely to be on vacation. Leading those combined meetings were Sandra Steingraber, Jeff deCastro, Ellie Rosenberg, Graham O, Bronwyn Mohlke, and Melissa Travis-Dunham and Chris Dunham. Of special note this year, Larry Clarkberg developed and piloted a blog designed to increase the accessibility of our work for our community. Used by the Lasers this year, we hope its use will expand to other groups in the upcoming year. We have continued to develop our outdoor meeting for worship at Hector meetinghouse this summer.

Our FDS classes faced an ongoing challenge in terms of space in Anabel Taylor Hall—two different groups met in the Café, meaning that the noise level was both more intense than each group alone would generate, but also that it was out of the control of each—if one wanted quiet for a project, for instance, the noise of the other became particularly (and unavoidably) disruptive.

We deeply appreciate the gifts of service that all teachers have given our meeting, and we thank the meeting for all the support it gives to this ongoing effort to teach our children the values and practices of Friends.

— *Michael Trotti, on behalf of CALM*

Volunteers Needed for "Empty Chairs"

On Friday, September 4, 2009, Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service (SPCS) of Tompkins County will remember those in our community who died by suicide by placing 480 empty chairs throughout Dewitt Park representing the approximate number of persons lost in Tompkins County since SPCS was founded 40 years ago. The chairs will be placed every 40 seconds as witness to the toll that suicide continues to take, worldwide. The event will begin at 2:00 pm and conclude around 6:00 pm.

SPCS is looking for volunteers to assist in DeWitt Park with tasks such as: setting up tents and display tables; placing chairs on the grounds; managing refreshments; and removing chairs at the end of the day. Volunteers will be needed from 11:00 am until 8:00 pm in one or two hour shifts. This is a great opportunity for a group to volunteer together for an hour or two. Please sign up by calling the SPCS office at 607-272-1505 or writing to spcsroleplayers@verizon.net.

— Lee-Ellen Marvin

Minutes of the July 2009 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business of the Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Tom Brown, Clerk
Steve Mohlke, Assistant Clerk
Marilyn Ray and Nancy Gabriel, Co-Recording Clerks
Steve Mohlke, Treasurer

(The @ signifies that the minute has been read and approved during Meeting. Please note that copies of all reports provided during this Meeting are on file with and available from the Recording Clerks.)

200907.1 Gathering. The Ithaca Monthly Meeting (IMM) of the Religious Society of Friends met on July 12, 2009, at Hector Meetinghouse for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. At 12:20 p.m., 10 F/friends settled into worship. Clerk read from the NYYM Advices and Queries for July (available in the IMM newsletter). The Minutes were read from the June Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Clerk reviewed the agenda for the day's meeting. @

200907.2 Committee Charges. Nancy Gabriel gave a progress report on the task of compiling IMM committees' and representatives' charges, and Meeting considered the next steps to be taken. It was agreed that the IMM website is the appropriate place for publishing the compilation of the charges in their present form. The need for secure access was discussed, and Friends APPROVED publishing the charges without password protection. A few paper copies will be made available for those not using the Internet. Each charge will include a notation of the date when it was approved. For those not yet approved, Clerk will initiate an ongoing process of consulting with that committee or representative and then bringing some charges to business meeting each month for approval. @

200907.3 Report from Ministry and Oversight. Steve Mohlke presented two items for the committee: the State of the Meeting Report, and a proposal for holding Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in the Light.

- a) After Friends had considered the State of the Meeting Report in silence, Clerk reviewed the process of its creation and drafting. It was APPROVED and copies will be taken to NYYM summer sessions in the hope of having it included with the others collected there.
- b) Steve read M&O's proposal that IMM begin a six-month trial of the practice of having two people present at each business meeting who have only one purpose, "being a centered presence, holding the body in prayer in order to better ground the group in the Spirit." There were questions and

discussions of this practice as it has been experienced in other Friends' gatherings. Meeting APPROVED a trial period of 6 months for this Holding Business Meeting in the Light. @

200907.5 Treasurer's report. Steve Mohlke reported on the Treasurer's work during the past month and Friends received the report. He drew our attention to an oversight on the 2009 budget which had allotted an unrealistically low figure to the Hector Meeting House operating and maintenance line. Meeting APPROVED allowing HMH committee to overspend its 2009 budget to a limit of \$500. @

200907.5 Next business meeting. Clerk noted that we often do not meet for business in August, and that at present there was no business carried over to next month. Friends APPROVED that, unless an urgency arises, our next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held on September 13, 2009, at the Hector Meeting House after the rise of Meeting for Worship.

At 1:50 p.m., 10 F/friends gathered in silent worship before adjourning.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Gabriel, Co-Recording Clerk

Words to Consider from Meeting for Healing

As I discovered that God is like a mother as well as a father, I awoke in a fresh way to the warm, gentle, nurturing Presence of God, to the one who gathers us, as Jesus said, like a mother hen gathers a chick under her wing (Matt. 23:37). Opening up to the mothering of God unearthed feelings of love from caves deep in my soul, caves that I had never explored. Not only does the mother metaphor bring us to a new ground of intimacy with God, it can also help us respond to a world at deep risk. It helps us find a new vision of caring for the world and helps us awaken to the primacy of relationship over power, embrace tenderness, and lovingly endure the labor pains necessary to bring about forgiveness, solidarity and community. The mothering of God reveals to us the God who suffers and feels and waits in order to create, birth and heal. When we relate to this image of God, we're more apt to make ourselves vulnerable, to incubate what's dark, care for the wounded, the broken and the alienated—the motherless in our world.

— Elizabeth Lesser

Summer Retreat is Upon Us

The event formerly known as “Quaker Camp” will be August 26th through August 29th. Our theme is “We Gather Together,” and we hope to work some on both sign language and AVP.

Extra hands are always appreciated. Would you enjoy reading a children’s book? Could you take a few children on a short nature walk? We always appreciate extra supervision on the day we swim, which we expect will be Saturday.

For more information about the event—and to volunteer or register—visit ithacamonthlymeeting.org/calendar/we-gather-together-2009/ or contact Rini Clarkberg or Bronwyn Mohlke

Silence Among Friends

*A light, delicate cloud of silence above us.
Our soft shuffling does not pierce it.
When one stands to speak
an opening
in silence
welcomes
soft words
of peace.*

—Thea Clarkberg (age 9)

August 2009 Calendar

Every Sunday

10:30a **Meeting for Worship** for all ages
10:45a Children are welcome to go 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 5-5:30p **Peace Vigil** at the bottom of East State Street near the Community School for Music and Arts

Monthly Events of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

August 9th — Called Meeting

Rise of Mtg **Called Meeting with attention to the property for sale at 606 West Dryden Road.**

August 23rd

Rise of Mtg **Dish-to-pass brunch** behind Hector Meetinghouse. Please bring finger foods to share.

Other Upcoming Events

Open House at Possible Meetinghouse for IMM Saturday, August 1, 10a-noon

Friends are invited to visit 606 West Dryden Road. Meeting for Worship will be from 10:30 to 11am. Pictures are available at picasaweb.google.com/mclarkberg/609WDrydenRoad# > For more information, call Rini Clarkberg, 279-4722.

Called Meeting Sunday, August 9, Rise of Meeting

Attention to the property for sale at 606 West Dryden Road.

Youth Retreat: We Gather Together Wednesday, August 26th - Saturday, August 29th

We will once again gather at our land for four days of Quaker-centered community. For more information—and to volunteer—visit ithacamonthlymeeting.org/calendar/we-gather-together-2009/ or contact Rini Clarkberg or Bronwyn Mohlke.

Dish-to-Pass... and Camp Out! Saturday, August 29th, 6pm

Please join the youth retreat community for a lovely dish-to-pass dinner under our large tent. Weather permitting, there will be a camp fire and other entertainments. Bring your own dishes if you

can; there will chairs and tables there. Overnight campers welcome! Breakfast—oatmeal and eggs—will be provided.

Meeting for Worship in the Birch Grove Sunday, August 30th, 9am

A special, outdoor Meeting for Worship in the Birch Grove adjacent to the Rte 79 property. All are welcome. For more information, contact Rini Clarkberg, 279-4722 or mec30@cornell.edu.

Wedding of Alexa Yesukevich and Emily Williams Sunday, September 6th, 2:30p

Emily Williams and Alexa Yesukevich will be married under the care of our Meeting at the Hector Meetinghouse. Friends are welcome at the wedding and at the reception at the Burt House afterward. The oversight committee for the wedding consists of Bronwyn Mohlke, Kris Altucher, Melissa Travis Dunham, and Chris Dunham. Please contact them if you would like to assist in preparing food or otherwise helping with the celebration.

Meeting for Healing Tuesday, September 8th, 7:15p

There will be no Meeting for Healing in August. If you have a concern, let Melody know and you will be held in the Light. For more information, call Melody, 272-8755.