



Newsletter of the

Ithaca Monthly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

December 2014

IMM CONTACTS

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

with message body as simply: join

Marilyn's List:

To email Friends and others about events in the Ithaca community, broader social causes or other 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

Addressing Hearing Difficulties in the Meeting

As many of you know, the Ministry and Worship Committee been considering for some time now measures we might take to improve the delivery of sound for those who are having difficulty hearing spoken ministry during Meeting for Worship. There are several hi-tech systems available for improving sound quality and delivery, but most of them are more appropriate for spaces in which speech comes from a single direction and an audience sits and listens to it.

Ministry and Worship has begun to feel that we might be ignoring the good as we search for the best. We felt the need to do something in the short term to help those who are missing a lot of messages even if it is not the ideal solution. A recent discussion with a professor of audiology at Ithaca College revealed that even though some of their classrooms are equipped with more sophisticated hearing-assistive technology, she found that in a discussion setting, passing a microphone from speaker to speaker worked best.

The Meeting owns two speakers and a microphone. We have been using this set-up in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business pretty regularly. We find that it is not that difficult to use once we are accustomed to the rhythm of it. Those who have trouble hearing say that it makes people's messages clearer.

The sharing we do after the end of Meeting for Worship represents a kind of surfacing. Worship ends, we make time for afterthoughts, we share joys and concerns, we hear introductions, and, finally, announcements. Our plan is to try phasing the microphone in gradually from the end, using it first just for announcements, then for introductions, then for joys and concerns, and then for afterthoughts. Finally, we'll try using the microphone during Meeting for Worship itself. We expect that some time during the next few months we may be able to collect enough money to purchase a digital wireless microphone, which will be easier to pass from speaker to speaker.

A few Friends have let us know that they are not easy with the decision to use a microphone during Meeting for Worship. We have felt some of that discomfort ourselves. This piece of technology, which is so much a part of the outside world, seems out of place in the setting of Meeting for Worship. We hope that, in the end, we are able to find a way to amplify our words in a way that will not be disruptive. Until that time, we want to be sure that we are not excluding those who do not have a choice about the quality of the sound they hear.

— *Ministry & Worship Committee:*

Antonia Saxon, Nancy Gabriel, Alexa Yesukevich, John Lewis, Chuck Mohler

Dyslexia! What is it, and how does it affect Friends in Meeting for Worship?

Hello! As I have been attending Ithaca Monthly Meeting for about four years now, I would like to share some information about dyslexia and my experience with it, especially relative to Quaker Meeting for Worship.

Dyslexia in the original Latin literally means “bad word.” The extended definition is “difficulty with reading and writing due to brain impairment.” Neither definition is correct. The true dyslexic actually has average or even above-average language skills, yet has trouble with the written representations of words. The first major indicator for dyslexia is a gap between intelligence and conventional written word aptitude. Other indicators include exceptional imagination and creative thinking abilities. Dyslexics are often highly intuitive and insightful, with corresponding spiritual perception. We exhibit a tendency to use analogies, left/right confusion, and an ability to see the big picture. We view the world differently. The dyslexic has the ability to see things from many points of view, all at once—thus the right/left confusion.

I’ve best been able to illustrate the difference between the average person and the dyslexic by getting the subject to look through a paper towel roll. I say “Look around; now close your eyes.” I ask them: “Tell me three things you saw.” Always three things are remembered, easily. Pulling the roll away, I say: “Look around rapidly in every direction, now tell me three things you saw.” Stuttering and stammering, they finally think of three things. That is the difference; the “normal” person’s mind is like the paper towel roll view. It’s easy to focus when your field of vision is three inches in diameter. The dyslexic’s mind is analogous to the broad view, all around. Yes, you saw everything, but limiting it to just three things isn’t so easy.

When comparing the thinking activity of the average person’s brain with the dyslexic’s brain, certain significant differences are found. The average, or “normal,” brain has segmentation of thought with different modes of thought corresponding to certain areas of the brain. For example, when one is thinking analytically, electrochemical impulses will fire off in a certain portion of the brain. When turned on sexually a different distinct portion of the brain will get excited. When thinking creatively yet another. For the dyslexic there is overall brain activity for all modes of thought, particularly around the periphery of the brain.

Da Vinci, Edison, Einstein, and Tesla are all thought to have been dyslexic. Dyslexics as a group are often very creative and intuitive. (Nikola Tesla is not very well known, yet he should be. He invented the generator that changes mechanical energy into alternating current electricity, the remote control, and the radio, among many other inventions. He generated ideas constantly: it was almost as if they came to him faster than he could work through them.)

Cornell Elves Program

The Elves Program has provided clothing, school supplies, and toys to thousands of students from dozens of area schools. Participants have the option of sponsoring a child themselves by selecting a profile and purchasing all the items on the form (\$100-150), donating money towards the sponsorship of a child or children in the program, or helping with the procurement of items with funds collected.

I often explain the written language gap in terms of learning a different language. Unless one learns multiple languages at a very young age, thought will never be in that language. That’s how it is for dyslexics. We can learn, even excel in, written language. Still, there will always be a gap.

Although a high school graduate, I found with my first experience at college that the public school system had passed me through and that I was functionally illiterate. During the first semester of university that realization hit me. Lacking reading, writing and math skills, I failed miserably. The next semester I totally ignored my advisors and curriculum and enrolled in many remedial classes. Along the way I taught myself how to “read” at a college level. I then experienced some good success. I graduated with a 3.7 GPA and was selected to join the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Still though, regardless of my educational experience and compensatory skills, I am truly dyslexic because I read and write in a very different way. Many years later, while in California, I was encouraged to undergo testing for learning disabilities; this test clearly showed me as disabled. As it was explained to me at the time, the “normal” individual’s test scores are right around the same level for the various tests. For myself, some scores were extremely high and others were lower, with a big gap between the two groupings. Finally I had the answer: I wasn’t stupid, as so many of my teachers and peers had judged. This was a very limited test, but at least it qualified me for the accommodations needed to have a fair chance.

How does that affect me in Meeting for Worship? Sitting still in Meeting for Worship can be very difficult. I sometimes move around and make funny little noises, which I’m not aware of. A small part of that is from my spinal injury. Nevertheless, for the dyslexic it takes a lot of effort to damp down one’s mind and spirit.

Right now as I dictate this, a Friend is attempting to edit the previous portion of this article. She’s going to find it extremely difficult. First of all, there may be qualms about seemingly outlandish assertions. Wait! I have just come back from Meeting for Worship. At our Meetinghouse we have a multi-generational First Day School meeting early on Sunday. A young man was having trouble sitting still and wanted to play with Legos. He said that he could get just as close to God playing with Legos as the rest of us could sitting there in silence. This brought about a conversation in which we spoke about so-called learning disabilities and the whole sitting-in-silence concept. For me my mind and spirit are more like a spinning top, spinning with so much energy and force that they appear to be perfectly still—yet they are going seven times the speed of light.

Thank you for “listening,”

— Christopher Church (Mr. CleanN)
CHRISTOPHERCHURCH@USA.com

If you know you would like a profile to sponsor a child, let me know and I can pass one along. Any donations can be brought in person or can be dropped in the mail to my home address (available in the directory) with checks addressed to me, personally, or to IMM with “Cornell Elves” in memo line. The deadline for gift donations is December 12.

— Gina Varrichio

Growing in Spirit Together

Register for GRIST groups in January

Are you interested in meeting regularly with a small group of people to share what is happening (or not happening) for you spiritually? In January we will open online registration for another round of GRIST groups of 4-5 people to meet and share. We will be asking people to sign up for a particular group based on a specified day and time that group will meet.

The underlying questions for each meeting are “What are the spiritual qualities of the everyday events in your life?” and “How has the Spirit been at work in your life since the last time we met?” Since these questions can be difficult to answer, new material has been prepared to help make it easier. If there is enough interest, we will offer one group focused exclusively on daily practice.

In the early days of Quakerism, friends would greet each other with “How goes the Spirit with thee? This was a serious question. It was not the “How are you?” with obligatory answer of “Fine,” regardless of how you really are, but a sincere desire to know the spiritual state of the other, which was considered paramount. Friends expected to know each other spiritually.

— “The Divine Center and Communal Nurture,”
Lynn Fitz-Hugh, *Friends Journal* 2010

We hope to continue this practice of sharing our spiritual search, experiences, and obstacles with one another.

NYYM letter, continued from page 5

The consent agenda, consisting solely of nominations and requests for release from service, was approved without modification.

Friends directed the clerk to endorse a travel minute for Margaret Mulindi to travel and work in Kenya.

The Sessions Committee reported that 170 adults, 26 teens and 2 younger children attended these sessions, giving a total of 196 Friends, and named the Host Committee’s members and many volunteers and the host meeting and School, to all of whom we are grateful for their resourceful and generous service.

The Sessions Committee also reviewed our forthcoming sessions and announced the uplifting and inspirational theme for our 2015 Summer Sessions.

— *Jeffrey L. Hitchcock, clerk*
New York Yearly Meeting

Change in Midweek Meeting at the Burt House

Recently there has not been sufficient interest to sustain a weekly Midweek Meeting at the Burt House. Thus, the Burt House Committee decided to change the Midweek Meeting there to the first Wednesday each month only, on a trial basis. So there will be a Midweek Meeting Wednesday, December 3, from 7:30 to

December in IMM History

A look back at our history through the minutes of our monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

5 Years Ago (December 13, 2009)

Business Meeting labored with the Earthcare Committee, which provided a draft, and produced a detailed minute on Energy Resources and Right Relationship with Earth.

30 Years Ago (December 10, 1984)

IMM approved the following minute on Sanctuary to be released to the press:

“In recent years 170 US churches, synagogues, and Quaker meetings have provided sanctuary to refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador fleeing persecution and violence. The [IMMRSF] joined this nationwide religious movement and is supported by the First Baptist Church of Ithaca and other community groups. This is an expression of our love and our commitment to the sanctity of human life.”

Included with the minutes is an article from the Dec. 6-12 issue of the Ithaca Times about sanctuary in the US, the story of refugee Alejandro Rodriguez, who spoke at Cornell, and local sanctuary efforts, including those of Ithaca Monthly Meeting.

50 Years Ago (December 14, 1964)

Jean Klune read a letter of appreciation from the African student, Amiable, that IMM has been supporting. She plans to end her coursework in December and to marry. Both Amiable and her fiancée plan to teach.

55 Years Ago (December 14, 1959)

Most of Business Meeting was devoted to what Friends felt were shortcomings of the Meeting—about the need to re-examine the depth and quality of the spiritual life of the Meeting, and of the need to get to know one another more closely. Suggestions included discussion groups, reconstitution of the elders and overseers as well as a peace and social concerns committee, and a retreat.

70 Years Ago (December 11, 1944)

Program Committee was happy to have Harold Cope home from his Civilian Public Service assignment; he is stationed in Orlando, FL. Harold described the hookworm control project his group was working on and some of the other problems the men come in contact with in the south. Harold reported that ten men from his unit had each written ten letters to prominent people expressing concern about the conscription policy Congress was considering, and that a number of replies had already been received.

— *Tom Brown, IMM historian*

8:00PM, followed by a period of fellowship that is officially 30 minutes, but is flexible to the wishes and interest of those present. We meet in the Meditation Room, the first room to the right as you enter the front door. I hope some of you will join me on Dec. 3.

— *Tom Brown*

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, November 9, 2014

Clerk: Antonia Saxon
Assistant Clerk: Marilyn Ray
Recording Clerks: Marin Clarkberg, Sue Ruff, and Nancy Gabriel

(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.)

2014 11.1 Gathering

Ithaca Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on November 9, 2014. At 12:15 pm, 17 Friends gathered and settled into worship. The clerk acknowledged John Lewis who was holding the Meeting in the Light.

Clerk read from *Listening Spirituality, volume II* by Patricia Loring:

We often undertake to communicate through “common denominators.” When we do, it’s hard to notice that spiritual discernment of the sense of the meeting is factored out of consensus. It’s easy to lose sight of what’s missing and its significance. By referring to Quaker “process” or Quaker “decision-making,” we complete the reduction of our life together to components that are describable in sociological terms. As in the case of the meeting for worship, the process tends to become what we think it is. The spiritual component can drop out when we find it indescribable in terms of social sciences.

Yet, it has been a cherished part of our convictions as a religious body that that we can, if we are willing, be drawn into a course of action that is not an accommodation of the ideas and desires of those present, but surpasses them, drawing them into harmony with Divine Will. In this spiritual process of submitting to Guidance, we go beyond negotiation, in which we give and take to find something we can all live with. We reach out for the new thing being offered us that is beyond our human desires and ideas. In order to enter this unity together, we reach out to receive the guidance of God that fulfills and surpasses our desires and ideas. We sacrifice nothing but our human willfulness.

We must consider whether we are really more comfortable with the human enterprise of “building consensus” than we are with the yieldedness of entering “listening worship” and “the sense of the meeting.” We must decide whether we need to remain within the limits of humanism and intellectual soundness that are our own achievements, or if we can receive them more fully as fruits of faithfulness to the Spirit--for the purpose of supporting our life in and with the Spirit.

2014 11.2 Children and the Life of the Meeting

Ellie Rosenberg from the Children and the Life of the Meeting (CALM) committee reported on the recent developments regarding First Day School. Rather than running age-based class groups for children during Meeting for Worship as has been our practice, CALM is currently running a programmed meeting for people of all ages that meets before our regular Meeting for Worship time. This adaptation is being considered an open-ended experiment.

The most successful recent programs included three components: they included ongoing physical activity, they were based on a spiritual message, and they were relatively leaderless once things got underway.

CALM would like to invite families to be open to the possibility that their children might grow from attending Meeting for Worship for longer than the 15 minutes. CALM would like the Meeting’s help in trying to envision what that a truly intergenerational Meeting would look like. The particular form of First Day School is only part of that envisioning. CALM is looking for additional thoughts.

Friends received the report. @

2014 11.3 Neighborhood Outreach Committee

Karen Friedeborn reported on behalf of the Ad Hoc Neighborhood Outreach Committee. With the experience of the Northside Community Celebration and with Meeting, and in consideration of feedback from Friends, the committee feels the spirit is there to be a standing committee of Ithaca Monthly Meeting. The proposed charge for the committee would be to continually look for new and effective ways to live our faith in our community. Karen spoke briefly about the concept of “network leadership” as a guiding principle for the group, described some possible future activities, and named some of the Friends who have been involved. Some Friends wondered about the relationship and possible overlap between the charges of Publicity Committee and the proposed Outreach Committee. Friends feel a great deal of enthusiasm for the work of the ad hoc committee, but also some confusion about how we look at the larger context of our committees in general. Friends approved the formation of the new standing committee. The committee was asked to work with Nominating to determine the number of appointed seats.

A larger discussion of committees and their charges may be important for the future. @

2014 11.4 Ad Hoc Immigrant Working Group

Garry Thomas reported on behalf of the Ad Hoc Immigrant Working Group has been working closely with Ambrose Lumanikio, a political refugee from the Congo who has been living rent-free at the Burt House since late May 2014. Given Ambrose’s recent part-time employment, the committee has asked Ambrose to pay \$100 monthly rent. He agreed readily to this.

As approved at our gathering in August of this year, a collection basket has been put out on Third Sundays for the (non-tax deductible) Refugee Assistance Fund. The Fund is running low and the committee anticipates some continuing expenses for Ambrose in the coming months. Meeting approved continuing the Third Sunday collection for the months of November, January and February. @

Minutes, continued on page 5

2014 11.5 Third Street Meetinghouse Committee

Garry Thomas reported on behalf of the Third Street Meetinghouse Committee (TSMC). The TSMC has collaborated with Signarama on a more permanent sign for the Meeting to display on Third Street. The new sign is planned to be 28 inches by 48 inches, and is compliance with the city's sign ordinance. The sign will be attached to the brick wall on Third Street. The total cost is expected to be between \$400 and \$450. Friends considered how we might display the time for our Meeting for Worship outside of our building, and requested that the TSMC put this information on the signboard by the ramp.

Dick Crepeau reported that the TSMC is considering whether our meetinghouse should be available for use by for-profit groups and seeks additional feedback. The TSMC finds that it is asked to make decisions on behalf of our Meeting, and various scenarios of building use can be difficult to evaluate in relation to our Quaker witness. Friends suggested some broad policy principles that the TSMC will consider further. Friends received the report. @

2014 11.6 Ministry and Worship Committee

- a. Chuck Mohler reported that the Ministry and Worship Committee recommends Tom Ruscitti for membership. The Clearness Committee had a wonderful discussion with Tom, and the Clearness Committee was clear that Tom is already a part of our Meeting. Friends joyfully approved the recommendation of membership for Tom. The Clerk observed that we have a practice of designating one of our monthly brunches as an opportunity to welcome new members. The date of this brunch will be determined with Tom.

- b. Nancy Gabriel then read memorial minute for Wilma Brown, a member of our meeting since 1972 who passed away May 12, 2014. Through the reading of the minute, Friends were reminded of Wilma's enduring commitments to peace witness and social justice. Preferring smaller worship groups such as Midweek Meeting at the Burtt House and summer meetings for worship at the Hector Meeting House, Wilma was a deeply devoted Friend who faithfully served our Meeting for over forty years. She is greatly missed. Friends approved the memorial minute. @

Tom Ruscitti expressed his appreciation for ten years of spiritual welcome. Another Friend noted the importance of several Friends who are no longer with us in making her feel a part of this meeting. @

2014 11.7 Treasurer's Report

Mike Simkin, Treasurer, reported that we have received 62% our donation request for 2014. He further noted that the income from the Burtt House is considerably lower than we had budgeted because of changes in the way we have been using the property. Friends received the report. @

2014 11.8 Other Concerns

There were no other concerns.

Fifteen Friends settled into worship at 2:25 before adjourning. Our next regular Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held at the rise of Meeting on December 14, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Marin Clarkberg, Recording Clerk

Happenings at Fall Sessions

The Clerk of New York Yearly Meeting, Jeffrey Hitchcock, recently prepared and distributed a summary of the events of Fall Sessions, held November 15th and 16th:

Dear Friends,

A number of Friends, more than in recent memory, gathered at Fall Sessions this past weekend. The minutes are now available [at www.nyym.org/?q=Minutes-2014FallSessions]. Here are some things that took place during meeting for business.

Friends heard a report of interim items approved by the clerk and general secretary, and a report of all such items approved since 2010 was made available.

We heard epistles from the 2014 sessions of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting and the 2014 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage.

The general secretary spoke about "Community, Communion and Living in Truth," and provided an additional written report.

The Treasurer reported that expenditures are running slightly ahead of revenues, but this is not a serious concern in the context of the total budget.

The 2015 operating budget was presented, and during discussion of income, we received an encouraging report from the Development Committee.

Friends heard that the operating budget supports a substantial volunteer effort as well as work of staff. Effort is underway to look at Yearly Meeting finances from a consolidated perspective, and with an eye to supporting our recently approved priorities. The budget is balanced. Covenant donations are level from last year. Many meetings were able to increase their donation but some were forced to decrease. Friends approved the budget.

Friends heard and approved a minute calling for president Obama to release Leonard Peltier from prison.

The Clerk reported on the ongoing Meetings Visitation Initiative, noting that 145 visits have been recorded this year. He suggested that lack of visitation between meetings and worship groups engenders a hierarchical perspective within our Yearly Meeting, and he offered a Friendly challenge that we record 500 visits by Summer Sessions 2015.

The Priorities Working Group reported on their continuing work, and gave a first reading of a set of minutes to guide implementation of the priorities and establish a Priorities Assessment Committee.

Friends heard and approved the second reading of a minute regarding the approval of interim actions by the clerk and general secretary.

The General Services Coordinating Committee recommended that the Development Committee be authorized to conduct fund appeals at their discretion, and Friends approved.

NYYM letter, continued in box on page 3

Women's Chair Yoga, Mondays and Fridays

Women's chair yoga meets on Mondays and Fridays from 11am to noon in the Third St. Meetinghouse. Gentle movements of body, mind and spirit. We all have Beginner's Mind. Just come, or contact Nancy Gabriel for information: ntg2@cornell.edu, 277-8930. We make a voluntary donation for the teacher.

Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair, December 6

The 11th annual Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair will be held on Saturday, December 6 from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the First Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches next to Dewitt Park. The Fair offers holiday shoppers an opportunity to choose gifts of charitable donations, rather than more "stuff." Since its start in 2004, the event has brought in over \$480,000 that has gone directly to participating organizations. (Participating organizations must have a 501(c)(3) designation, an active local presence, and an annual budget of no more than \$2 million.) www.ithacaaltgiftfair.org/.

James Ricks reports back from African Heritage Delegation to Israel-Palestine

On October 26, local anti-drone activist, James Ricks, traveled to Israel-Palestine for two weeks with the Interfaith Peace Builders African Heritage delegation. He saw the situation first hand and spoke with Palestinians about how human rights advocates can support the Palestinian struggle for freedom & justice.

Tuesday, December 2, 7:00-9:00 pm

Ithaca Friends Meeting 120 3rd St.

Co-sponsored by the Ithaca Friends Meeting Social Justice Committee, Committee for Justice in Palestine, and the Ithaca chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace. Contact Ariel Gold (510) 599-5330, arielgold19@gmail.com

Christmas Eve Open House with Toni & Kirsten

Drop by Toni Murdough and Kirsten Marshall's anytime December 24th between 6 and 11p, 520 North Tioga Street, 273-9037.

December 2014 Calendar of Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Midweek Meeting at the Burtt House Wednesday, December 3, 7:30p

Join us for thirty minutes of worship followed by a period of fellowship. The Burtt House is at 227 N. Willard Way, and we meet in the Meditation Room, the first room to the right as you enter the door. (Note: as described on page 3, there are no other mid-week meetings at the Burtt House planned for December.)

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Sunday, December 14, Rise of Meeting

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

Annual Holiday Sing with Melody and Dick Sunday, December 21, 7p

Bring your instruments and voices, 112 Mount Pleasant Road. We'll sing all our favorites and some new ones as well. We'll be sure to sing The Grinch, Lennon's Happy Christmas, Christmas in the Trenches, traditional carols and Hannukah songs. Bring nibbles and we'll sing and munch. Come at 7 and we'll start the music right away. Versatile Susan Murphy will play piano.

Christmas Brunch Sunday, December 21, Rise of Meeting

All are invited to stay for fellowship and a bite to eat after the rise of meeting. Friends are invited to bring a dish to share with others.

Christmas Eve Meeting for Worship Wednesday, December 24, 7p

Join Friends at the Burtt House, 227 N. Willard Way for a one-hour period of worship.

New Year's Eve Meeting for Worship Wednesday, December 31, 11pm

Join Friends at the Third Street Meetinghouse. There are tentative plans for a festive gathering before worship &/or a sleepover and breakfast on New Year's Day. Details will be announced.

Newsletter submissions due Thursday, January 1, 5p

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

Every Sunday

- 9:15a Multigenerational **worship**
- 9:30a Multigenerational **First Day School**
- 10:30a **Meeting for Worship** for all ages
- 10:30a **Childcare (0-8 years old)**: attenders may exit the meetingroom when they so choose to attend childcare.

Other Weekly IMM Events

- Wed 5:30-6:30p **Meeting for worship** at the Third Street Meetinghouse