

Worship & Action for Peace Letter
November 10, 2004

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting,

We send you a letter by Jens Braun of our Yearly Meeting and clerk of the NYYM Committee on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation. Jens writes calling us as NYYM Friends to attention to conscience, to a fresh practice of inward listening and of sharing what we conscientiously hear.

Nest week, we hope to forward a letter by Paul Lacey, clerk of the Board and Corporation of the American Friends Service Committee, reflecting on “what we mean when we talk about following conscience and on what it means to be a conscientious objector,” together with a brief report on the meeting of the AFSC Corporation last week. And in two weeks, we expect to share words from the General Committee of the Friends Committee on National Legislation about FCNL’s lobbying priorities for the coming two-year congressional term, to be discerned during the FCNL Annual Meeting this week.

In September 1664, Margaret Fell was tried and sentenced to life in prison (of which she served approximately 4 ½ years) and forfeiture of her property for refusing to take the Oath of Obedience to the King. She famously answered the announcement of this sentence:

Although I am out of the King’s protection, yet I am not out of the protection of the Almighty God.

(See “An Abstract of the Life of Margaret Fell,” *Gwynedd Friends Meeting Historical Notes*, http://www.gwyneddfriends.org/margaret_fell.html; and “Let Your Lives Speak,” Elfrida Vipont Foulds, *Pendle Hill Pamphlet 71* (1953), <http://www.pendlehill.org/pdf%20files/php071.pdf>.)

Friends have great strength and competence to bring to bear as we learn how to be conscientious citizens of the world in these times. We also have a confusing shadow, a history of disabling guilt, numbing comfort, and spiritual complacency. We need to learn to say “No” to confusion. We are grateful for thoughtful words to awaken us to the joy of walking, undistracted, in the Light.

In care,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer, Lu Harper
Worship and Action for Peace working group

Dear Friends,

In the spirit of Worship and Action, many of us have looked inward to see heavy hearts, great sadness, anger, and incomprehension. We look outward to see a world spinning out of balance towards self-destruction. We have some choices: a) Despair and be sad. b) Continue our current line of protests, letter writing, and political action. c) Look for new/ancient/alternative ways to manifest our love of each other and the planet.

In the spirit of c) above, we would like to ask you to do one thing in November. It is a small and a large thing, but please consider doing it. We feel this is an appropriate action for right now--at the end of a period of intense and emotional action, at the beginning of a new phase of the use of political power in this country. We Friends sit in worship with the understanding that we are listening for what the Light has to share with us. Using and honing these listening skills, hear now what your own still small voice of conscience is saying.

Please, take the time to:

1. Think out and write down how your conscience responds to the priorities set for the use of resources, power, and force by our government. Address your understanding of the spiritual basis for your conscience's reaction. Do not yet consider any actions you might take, only provide yourself with a record of what you hear your conscience saying to you in November of 2004. If you have written such pieces in the past, pull these out and review them, but do it only after you have written the initial draft of the state of your conscience today. Then feel free, based on your earlier wisdom, to edit your new statement. Your writing can be short or long; we ask only that it come from your heart.
2. Once the piece is written, consider making three copies. Though the words of one's conscience are directed at oneself, consider allowing these words to be made public, in the sense of your sharing a piece of your conception of the Light with others of us who wish to broaden our measure of God's Light within us. As Friends we have a long history of corporate discernment which only comes with sharing and listening. Keep one copy of your written piece in your files and, if you are willing, send the second copy to your Meeting and the third to New York Yearly Meeting, care of CCOMT (Committee on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation, under Peace Concerns Committee). You know how to contact your Clerk or Ministry and Council for submission of your statement. To contact CCOMT at the Yearly Meeting level, your statement can be sent or e-mailed to:

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3. Talk about this with others in your Meeting and outside of it. Encourage others to strengthen their skills of listening to their consciences through the exercise of writing down what they hear. Support others in sharing their messages with your Meeting and with the Yearly Meeting through the COMT committee.

Let us be clear. Our intention here is to live our beliefs, with the understanding that our actions will always benefit from a constant returning to the Center, the Seed, our Pool of Nourishment and Peace.

Only then do we again look outward—perhaps even “outside the box”—to new ways of sharing that which so deeply has called our souls. This calling may require us to develop our peacemaking skills to much higher levels. Right now we are inviting you to strengthen your skills of inward listening and of sharing the understandings you have been given.

Thank you, we look forward to where the Spirit will move us in the coming years.

Jens Braun

Clerk, Committee on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation