

## Worship and Action Update

11/1/02

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

This past weekend saw hundreds of thousands gather for peace in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, major cities in Europe, and hundreds of locales large and small throughout the United States. Many meetings organized buses to transport Friends to Washington, and other Friends attended and even spoke at local rallies.

In the wake of this outpouring of expressions for peaceful alternatives to war on Iraq, some Friends have experienced two concerns. The woeful under-reporting and seemingly intentional misreporting of the events by major media has caused doubts, even cynicism, about the honesty of our media and questions about how we can be better instruments of truth. The mix of convictions, agendas and beliefs about nonviolence that typify peace rallies also stirred concerns about lending ourselves to the causes of persons and groups with whom we are not in complete unity.

This experience may help remind us that navigating the turbulent sea of politics without losing the steadying keel of faith can be demanding and potentially treacherous. Walter Wink (among others) might counsel that the potential for grace in persons and entities whose Light has dimmed justifies the risk and burden of engagement with them. And we may find encouragement in the acknowledgment of some media, such as National Public Radio (explicitly) and the *New York Times* (implicitly), that their initial reporting had been deficient and inaccurate. How then can we better know the truth and make the truth known? How can we employ our voice without its becoming muffled or mutated by a cacophony of disparate voices? And how can we find common ground with those with different callings?

The e-mail list utilized by some in New York Yearly Meeting to share information and opinion, "QuakerWanda" (Quaker Witness and Action), may be one means for finding and sharing both truth and concern. You can join by sending a message from the email address at which you want to receive QuakerWanda messages to [quakerWanda-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:quakerWanda-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You don't have to do anything else.

Much information continues to be posted on the NYYM Web site—[www.nyyym.org](http://www.nyyym.org)—particularly on the Peace Action page, and peace links—Quaker, other faiths', and nonsectarian—have been assembled on the Web site's Peace page, directly under "Quakerism" in the upper left corner of the NYYM home page (or by going to [www.nyyym.org/peace](http://www.nyyym.org/peace)).

In a coming Worship & Action Update we will distribute information about Web sites that may be especially reliable and informative. If you make use of site that you have found to be uniquely insightful, please share information about it with us (by sending an email to [paul@nyym.org](mailto:paul@nyym.org)) so that we can include it in the Update.

This past week also saw Friends gathering around our peace testimony in forums other than rallies or marches.

Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting held its Fall Gathering this past weekend focused around worship and action for peace. On Friday evening (October 25), Jane Simkin talked and answered questions about her time with the Friends Peace Teams delegation in Colombia, doing AVP workshops and listening to the experiences of those who have lived for years with violence out of control in their society. The next day, when talk turned to Iraq and where to direct our attention, Friends acknowledged the underlying connectedness of the out-of-control violence in many places in the world. Meetings had been asked to come prepared to share how they are responding to the call to shared worship and action for peace, which they did speaking out of the silence in worship sharing. Friends spoke of small connections and large efforts, the comfort of company at potlucks, standing together in vigils, meeting with a congress representative who voted No to war, finding our voice and our ability to act placing newspaper ads. The sharing opened into searching and reflection, and Bridget Moix of the FCNL told of her choices to direct her attention again in Washington, D.C., because what happens there makes such a difference all over the world. She inspired Friends with her deep delight in the Quaker way, hopeful and cheerful as we experience great inward power to act.

On Saturday, October 26, Summit Meeting held a training program for counselors on conscience and war, led by Bill Galvin. Over 40 Friends attended, including young Friends, and even seasoned counselors on draft issues learned much from the presentation. The prospect of a draft being instituted if the country proceeds with war on Iraq makes pressing the need to develop counselors among and for our young adults. Friends' assumed expertise on conscience and war ("Every Monthly Meeting A Peace Center") has made meetings a beacon of hope and help in past wars to those in our communities troubled by military service and likely will again if we wage war against Iraq. Additional training programs in other regions of NYYM are being planned. And time is expected to be included on the agenda for this topic at Representative Meeting on December 7th and 8th in Chatham, New Jersey (at the Chatham Middle School).

The culture of violence in our midst often seems impervious to the Light of reason, humanity, and love. It is not. We cannot know when or where peace will break in. But a leading is not measured by practicalities, and God's community proceeds by small steps. We can relish that people of good faith came together this past week to make their collective voices heard even if some chose not to acknowledge the gathering sound and some spoke in discordant tones. We cannot know now if this will make a difference, but we surely know that the surprise of peace breaking in will never arise if we do not make the effort.

In continuing care,

*Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer  
NYYM Worship & Action working group*