

Worship and Action Update, June 6, 2003

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting,

George Watson, a Friend of long experience and a political scientist, has said in discussions about our spiritual ground that just because we call something "consensus" doesn't mean God is not there or that we are not actually finding a sense of the meeting. Secular committees can be transformed by their experience. And even so, we have learned that as Friends we need to remember and name the practices we trust, so that we can call ourselves back to Truth.

It is easy to seek out the news we agree with and people who speak in the same terms we do. It is too easy to protest what we disagree with and ask others to change. In these times we want change, we want ground we trust as we grow and change with others into the next round in the spiral dance of the peaceable kingdom.

As Friends, we ground ourselves in experience. We reach to connect with the experience of others. Many Friends are finding connections and encouragement in interfaith collaborations and community work close to home. Many are also encouraged by connections in secular contexts, such as those suggested by Jeff Menoher of Wilton Monthly Meeting, and clerk of Purchase Quarter's Peace Concerns Committee. He wrote to the clerk of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting:

My peace-oriented political activism recently brought me into contact with two organizations that are interested in developing contacts and awareness within the Friends community in the Metro Area. They are: WBAI radio, and the ACLU.

I promised Mr. Lee Fleischer, who is a contact person for ACLU's Campaign to Protect the Bill of Rights, that I would inquire among Friends regarding his desire to present his materials in New York Meetings, and possibly address their memberships. I have heard that there is already some contact between Friends and the ACLU at Brooklyn Meeting. His contact email is LFleis3960@aol.com .

WBAI (99.5 FM radio) is also interested in developing contacts among Friends. Their mission is predictably twofold: to increase their listenership and increase financial support. I find WBAI particularly interesting as a venue for peace messages after listening to a presentation by their general manager, Don Rojas, who described a WBAI mission that is strikingly similar to Friends practices. In my opinion, this is worth pursuing, and I have been spending quite a bit of volunteer time in their offices. WBAI's development contact is Ursula Rudenberg, whose email is ursula@wbai.org .

Please spread the word if you find these prospects appealing. I do.

Many Friends have been heartened by the constructive, responsible approach of MoveOn as a nonpartisan citizens action organization. MoveOn has invited its members to talk with one another on the telephone to share their experience and hopes toward a comprehensive approach:

. . . [W]e're kicking off a process that will bring MoveOn members, policy analysts, political leaders, and visionaries together to chart a course for our work. Together, we can contribute to a vision for the United States that really reflects the American people, rather than the views of corporate special interests or right-wing ideologues. We'll use the results of this process to develop a call to action and a pragmatic guide for our future work together.

The process starts today, and the first step is to hear from you. We really want to know what stirs you to action, what you're concerned about, and what gives you hope.

We're gathering this information with a twist: rather than fill out an online survey, you'll be paired up for a phone conversation with another MoveOn member, and you'll report back on what your partner has to say. It'll be fun. And together we'll work to start a national discussion about America's future. It won't take more than an hour of your time.

You can sign up to participate right now (and get the details) at:
http://moveon.org/interview/?id=1424-1241094-G_yUnG6bM9L.jJ594gVzuA

The idea of people pursuing concerns by exploring connections and finding courage from this experience is held out as a possibility by Jonathan Schell (author *Fate of the Earth* and a new book, *The Unconquerable World*) in an article on the challenge of moving beyond protest to constructive change in this week's *Nation*
<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20030623&s=schell>.

He concludes, ". . . [S]uccess in the mainstream will not come without first building independent strength. Courage, like fear, is contagious, and those who are afraid to be themselves can never persuade others of the justice of their cause."

God is a source of strength and competence. God includes everything and all of us. We humans anchor in specifics.

We are helped by hearing of each other's experience, when we speak up at home in our meetings and also when we share in wider circles. Through the Worship and Action network we could explore particular questions or topics in writing and in gatherings, network with others involved in one approach or another (Quakers Move On?), or share ideas by writing to the working group care of the New York Yearly Meeting Office. Where are we finding ways forward? How do we stay grounded as we move? Let's talk with one another!

Peace filled greetings,

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

We're gonna do what the spirit say do. . . .
What the spirit say do we're gonna do, oh Lord,
We're gonna do what the spirit say do.

We're gonna pray what the spirit say pray!

We're gonna sing what the spirit say sing!
We're gonna march when the spirit say march! *Worship & Song*, #259

And every one 'neath their vine and fig tree
Shall live in peace and unafraid.
And into ploughshares turn their swords,
Nations shall learn war no more. *Worship & Song*, #300, based on Micah 4:3-4